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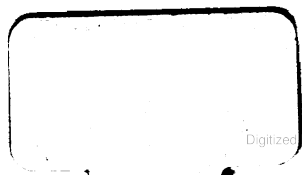
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English Readings



MILTON'S  
LYRIC AND DRAMATIC POEMS

KC 4271











THE  
LYRIC AND DRAMATIC  
POEMS  
OF  
JOHN MILTON

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,

BY

MARTIN W. SAMPSON

*Professor of English in Indiana University*



NEW YORK  
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## PREFACE.

THE purpose of this book is to provide a new approach to Milton, by giving for the first time in one volume the text of all of Milton's English lyric and dramatic poems, annotated for school or college use. To the minor poems (including *Comus*) so frequently edited, I have added *Samson Agonistes*, in the belief that an introduction to the study of Milton may more appropriately lead through the lyric and dramatic poems than through the minor poems and selections from *Paradise Lost*. The sublimity of Milton, as revealed in the great epic, is not readily felt by a young student, who may, however, gain from Milton's tragedy a sense of the poet's greatness, as distinguished from those qualities which the minor poems so amply illustrate.

The first edition of the minor poems appeared in 1645, and was reprinted in 1673. *Comus* appeared independently in 1637; *Lycidas* in 1638, in a volume of memorial verse by several hands; and *Samson Agonistes* in 1671, in a volume with *Paradise Regained*. These editions, together with the Cambridge MS., which is chiefly in Milton's own hand, are the authorities for any text. I have used the

British Museum copies of the 1645, 1671, and 1673 editions, and Dr. Aldis Wright's fac-simile of the MS. The MS. contains, it may be said, either the original drafts, or early copies, of *Arcades*, *Comus*, a few of the shorter lyrics, most of the sonnets, and some notes of great biographical interest relating to possible subjects for future work. The MS. is, of course, an immensely valuable document to students of Milton. There is also a Bridgewater MS. of *Comus*, which is thought to be in Lawes's hand. Todd printed this MS. in 1798, and in his 1801 edition of Milton gave the various MS. readings, which are not, however, of importance in settling difficulties: the most interesting variation is that which makes part of the invocation to Sabrina (867-889) a trio instead of a solo.

Todd's complete edition of Milton (1801, and three times afterward re-issued) contains many *variorum* notes of value, especially in locating parallel passages. Professor Masson's several editions and his great *Life* of the poet have, in the field of literary scholarship, inseparably associated his name with Milton's. To Professor Masson every present-day editor of Milton must be under great obligation. Other editions (among them those of Newton, Keightley, Browne) I have carefully examined, finding occasional assistance, which I have duly recorded. I have been aided but little by the many school editions, excepting the edition by Mr. Verity, the *Samson Agonistes* edited by Mr.

Percival, and the *Lycidas* edited by Mr. Jerram, which have been of service.

The text follows the first editions as closely as modern spelling, capitalization and punctuation permit. In punctuation I have tried to be logical rather than uniform.

The proper order of the poems is not an easy matter to determine: a chronological order cannot be established with certainty. In this edition those poems that seem to belong together have been placed together, and within the groups the poems come in the order in which they were written, so far as that can be ascertained.

I have made (with much diffidence) one emendation in the text. Line 1218 of *Samson Agonistes*, which in all editions reads:

‘ And had performed it if my known offence ’

is a line which has had no assured meaning. The proposed change is:

‘ And had performed it if mine own offence ’

—a reading which brings out, I believe, the obvious antithesis in the sentence. Milton was blind when he composed the line, and as ‘ my known ’ and ‘ mine own ’ sound alike, there was no reason for him to suspect the clerical or typographical error, if error it was.

The Introduction aims to set forth the principal quality of Milton’s style, the use of literary ma-

terial in *Comus*, and the structure of the dramatic forms in which *Comus* and *Samson Agonistes* are written. The lyric poems are not made the subject of especial discussion here, because in the Comments and Questions they receive sufficient comment to make obvious their simpler aspects.

A teacher of Milton should have access, at least, to these books: Masson's *Library Edition of Milton*, 3 vols. (Macmillan, 1890); Robert Bridges' *Milton's Prosody* (Clarendon Press); Osgood's *The Classical Mythology in Milton's English Poems* (Yale Studies in English: VIII., Holt); Beeching's reprint of *The Poems of John Milton* (Clarendon Press); and some brief life of Milton—Pattison's (Harper's) or Garnett's (Scribner's). Masson's *Life* (6 vols., Macmillan) is necessary to any one who wishes to be fully informed concerning the details of Milton's life. References in this present edition to vol. i. are to the revised first volume. Material regarding the mask is to be found in Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*, Symonds' *Predecessors of Shakespeare*, and Verity's Introduction to *Comus*.

I am greatly indebted to my colleagues, Professor G. H. Stempel and Professor J. M. Clapp, for their criticism of my MS.

M. W. S.

CHATHAM, MASS.,  
12 July, 1901.

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## INTRODUCTION.

The full range of Milton's genius cannot, of course, appear in any volume that excludes *Paradise Lost*, but the poems here given show not inadequately the two strains of feeling that make up the quality we call Miltonic. These two strains,—not often found together, and rarely found in full measure,—proceed from Milton's exquisite sense of beauty and from his sense of the sublime and morally lofty. The feeling for beauty is usually a thing of delicacy and refinement, but may be austere as well,—a passion for severe and perfect outline and form. In Milton, not merely the austerity of beauty is evident, but the softer grace is present, too; a rare union indeed in English verse. And these two recognitions of beauty, together with the sense of the sublime, form a rarer union still. Frequent enough is the spontaneous instinct for simple and sensuous beauty, unaccompanied by the stern sense of artistic form or by the craving for self-control that means ultimately a guiding mastery of life: this instinct Keats, for example, showed in his earlier work; in his later verse, Keats, too, attained impassioned expression of beauty, under perfect control of form, and now and then one finds



in him a note of lofty vision that suggests the enduring quality of all of Milton's poetry.

To be more specific, Milton has the instinct for perfect speech as keenly as has a precisian: yet the right word to him is not merely the word which gives the exact meaning,\* but the word whose connotation, through beauty of sound and dignity of association, is the richest. He has the carefulness that distinguished Coleridge, and also as great a love of melodious language as one may find in Marlowe or Swinburne or Edgar Poe. The intellectual Puritan in him, however, saves him from the temptation to become a voluptuary of fragrant language, and let beauty run riot in his verse. Beauty is the joyous ornament of his poetry, never the sum and substance of his thought. But not merely the beautiful word, the well-rounded verse, are part of Milton's style; graceful images and vivid illustrations are part of it as well. It is a style possessing wealth of beauty, and yet, with all its richness, coming nearer a perfect balance than perhaps any man's since Sophocles. If the style is not quite perfect, it is because in the matter of imagery Milton at times nears the danger mark: more than once he is perilously near the mere conceit.\* This fault in taste (for that is what it really is) might be attributed to the fashion of the time; but this expla-

\* Milton shows occasionally in his verse itself a real philological instinct. Cf. *Comus* 325, 748-9; *Sam. Agon.* 1418.

† Cf. *Comus* 251-2, for example.

nation would not excuse the poet's yielding to the tasteless fashion. Obviously it is safer to admit the fact that Milton was not perfect, and to regard the fault as one of his imperfections; recognizing, too, that usually Milton's images are as sound as they are vivid. In grace, in euphony, in certainty of touch, in clearness of conception, then, Milton reveals his love of beauty, a feeling far higher than a merely sensuous delight in loveliness can be.\*

\* One may hardly speak of Milton and sensuousness in the same sentence without sending the reader's thoughts to Milton's *obiter dictum* regarding poetry, as something 'simple, sensuous, and passionate.' This point it will be well to consider briefly. The words were not meant to be an absolute description of poetry; they indicate a contrast between poetry and logic or rhetoric. Compared with these, poetry is indeed simple (not subtle), sensuous (not abstract), and passionate (not unemotional). The words as generally taken, however,—provided they be not regarded as exhaustive,—are by no means unsatisfactory as a comment on the real nature of poetry itself. Simple, in the sense of clear; sensuous, because possessing a lively appeal to sense-experience; and passionate, in the sense of having the great movement of powerful feeling: these qualities belong to poetry. But applying the words, in their familiar sense, to Milton, we find him not as simple as is, for instance, Longfellow; not sensuous to the degree that Keats is; not passionate, after the fashion of Burns and Byron: and yet meriting all these adjectives. Obviously, when so much depends on the definition we attach to the words, the words themselves should not be carelessly used as if completely expressing Milton's theory of poetry. The brief paragraph from Milton's treatise on *Education* is as follows:

'And now, lastly, will be the time to read with them those organic arts, which enable men to discourse and write perspicu-

The Puritan imperviousness to beauty (a fact so frequently commented upon) has no place in Milton's make-up. The Puritan in him obviously sustains him in his effort toward righteousness; but not less, I believe, the Puritan in him makes him hold fast to his sense of perfect form. Granted the feeling for beauty to begin with, Milton could hold to it steadfastly; not, indeed, because he was a Puritan, but because the qualities that made him a Puritan made him loyal to the ideal things of life, to poetry and music as well as to ideals of personal conduct. Herein lies the secret of his belief that true poetry can be written only by one whose life is a true poem. A mere moralist could not have thought of the idea under that image; but Milton thus finely and nobly indicates his sense of the kinship between right living and noble thinking,—a kinship which by no mere verbal process gives us our phrase, 'the art of living.' His puritanism, then, is not antagonistic to his sense of beauty, but is ultimately derivable from a common source, his aspiration for the ideal in life,—beauty no less than conduct.

ously, elegantly, and according to the fittest style, of lofty, mean, or lowly. Logic, therefore, so much as is useful, is to be referred to this due place with all her well-couched heads and topics, until it be time to open her contracted palm into a graceful and ornate rhetoric, taught out of the rule of Plato, Aristotle, Phalereus, Cicero, Hermagenes, Longinus. To which poetry would be made subsequent, or indeed rather precedent, as being less subtle and fine, but more simple, sensuous, and passionate.'

And this leads us directly to the other element of the Miltonic quality, the sense of loftiness. Here no qualifying words are needed: Milton apprehends high things; his thought moves on a high level. This alone does not make a poet great: as much may be said of Emerson, who is not a great poet. It is because Milton thinks of higher things imaginatively, is stirred to deep emotion over them, and expresses his lofty conceptions in noble language, that we count him great in poetry. To have a high ideal, this is a part of morality; to be profoundly moved by it, this is passion; but to have in addition the gift of bringing home to others the moving power of the concrete ideal, this is to create literature of a large and enduring kind. Milton never loses faith in his vision of sublimity, and never speaks of it inadequately; therefore his readers are impelled to share his faith, and to accept his vision with inspiring delight. For, and thus we return to our starting point, in his lofty flights Milton's sense of beauty does not desert him; in his vision of the beautiful his sense of moral grandeur never fails. But it is not in a hackneyed identifying of beauty and truth that I would state Milton's poetic virtue; rather in his far-reaching aspiration, in his prophetic vision, and in his knowledge of the value of beautiful images and harmonious speech, do I find the strains that unite in Milton.

Limitations are not difficult to find: a genial humor, a kindly view of the daily life of men and

women, an ability to put himself in another's place: these characteristics are clearly not Milton's. Perhaps he would have been the less Milton if they were. Certainly, no lover of great verse would exchange the poetry that springs from Milton's strenuous insistence on right toward man and duty toward God, for the poetry that grows out of mere happy kindliness, charming as such poetry may be. But, and the point must be insisted upon, in choosing Milton to read, one is not choosing the austere and rejecting the beautiful; one is accepting the eminently beautiful and the eminently lofty: not exhaustively either of them, but more of both than may be found in harmony in any other poet, save one, of our English race.

#### THE SOURCES OF COMUS.

The fundamental conception of *Comus* is thoroughly Miltonic: the idea of the strength of right against evil,—more specifically of chastity against lust,—is instinctive with Milton, and is therefore not to be traced to any other source than the heart of the poet. Such a conception was bound to come into expression, and might as readily have found its occasion elsewhere as it did in the invitation to write a mask. But this invitation presented the adequate opportunity, and Milton grasped it. How his thoughts happened to turn to the specific subject, *Comus*, we have no certain means of know-

ing. We may only guess what sent his thoughts to this personage, Comus, rather than to Diana or Vesta on the one hand, or to Venus, Silenus, or still lower divinities on the other,—whether it was an impulse entirely spontaneous, or bookish. It seems more than likely that in his reading Milton had found suggested to him in the character of Comus a type of the insinuating sensuality so repugnant to his own clean nature.

At any rate, there is at least one work with which Milton might have come into contact, the *Comus*\* of Puteanus, which was probably written in 1608. A second edition was printed in 1611 in Louvain; and another edition came out in Oxford in 1634.

If Milton owes anything to this work, it is, as has been said, a suggestion only. It is, however, at very least, a matter of interest to consider for a moment a literary work called *Comus*, whose appearance in England in the year of the presentation of Milton's mask is such a striking coincidence. The *Comus* in question is a long and rather tedious Latin composition in prose, interspersed with verse, by a Dutch writer, Hendrik van der Putten, a professor of Eloquence at the university of Louvain. The work is in the familiar form of a dream. The author is carried in vision to the Cimmerian regions

\* The full title of the book is *Comus, sive Phagesiposia Cimmeria. Somnium*. The copy that I have used makes part of a collection of satires, bearing date 1655.

to the palace of Comus, where a banquet (Phagesiposia) is held. Pleasures and passions are among the riotous guests, and the ideals of the hermaphrodite Comus (*Paucis: totum Voluptatis regnum meum est; nec felix quisquam, nisi, qui meus*) are duly insisted upon. An old man, Tabutius, seeks to expose the hollowness of these ideals of delight, and discusses at great length the significance of the several vices. When Tabutius finally ceases to expound, the dreamer awakes.

It is obvious that nothing of the plot of Milton's *Comus* came from this work, which is neither an orderly narrative nor a well-arranged dialogue. Comus, the main character, is really kept in the background while the other characters talk pedantically. At most, Milton may have read the work, approved its underlying idea, and have recognized in its title figure a personage possible to treat more fully, or more effectively. And thus he was provided with an inspiring suggestion, which in due time he would work out in his own way. So much and no more may be accounted the debt of Milton to the *Comus* of Puteanus.

There was another portrayal of the god Comus that was still more easily accessible to Milton: Ben Jonson's mask *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1619). This mask had as one of its principal figures Comus himself; not the rather subtle Comus of the Phagesiposia, but a rollicking god of good eating and abundant drinking, a 'belly-god.'

This character has practically nothing in common with Milton's Comus, and the whole mask could have had very little direct effect on Milton,\* as the following analysis will show. The scene is the base of Mt. Atlas. Comus rides in in triumph, 'to a wild music of cymbals, flutes and tabors.' His attendants sing a boisterous song of praise,—chiefly of Comus's culinary exploits. The Bowlbearer of Hercules in a free and easy way comments facetiously on the qualities of Comus, and on the power of hard drinkers to transform themselves into drinking vessels. This speech serves to introduce the antimask, a dance of men 'in the shape of bottles, tuns, etc.' Hercules enters, and denounces the merrymakers for abusing the wine that should be the reward of thirsty heroes. The Comus rout vanishes, and there appear Pleasure and Virtue and

\* The final song in Jonson's mask, however, is more in accord with the spirit of Milton than the commentators seem to have noticed. These lines upon Virtue might readily find a place in *Comus*:—

'She, she it is in darkness shines,  
'Tis she that still herself refines,  
By her own light to every eye ;  
More seen, more known, when Vice stands by :  
And though a stranger here on earth,  
In heaven she hath her right of birth.

'There, there is Virtue's seat :  
Strive to keep her your own ;  
'Tis only she can make you great,  
Though place here make you known.'



their attendants, who sing a short ode in praise of Hercules, urging him to sleep after his labors. Immediately follows a second antimask, this time of pigmies, who, seeing Hercules asleep, determine to capture him. Before doing it, however, they display in a pigmy dance their pigmy joy over their coming triumph. The music awakens Hercules, and the pigmies run to their holes. Mercury appears: he crowns Hercules with a garland of poplar, and declares that this night Pleasure is reconciled to Virtue. A song of the followers of Pleasure and Virtue succeeds, and the wise Dædalus enters to give them laws. Three songs from him follow, interspersed with dances of the maskers, the songs interpreting the significance of the dances. Then Mercury sums up the meaning of the mask, in a song, of which the lines to Virtue (quoted above) are a part. The mask ends in another dance.

Putting this into a compacter form will show the proportions of a typical mask, so far as poetry and dancing are concerned.

Comus scene	{	Song (Chorus) Speech (comic) Antimask (Dance)
Hercules scene	{	Speech (serious) Song (Chorus) Antimask (Dialogue and Dance) Song (Chorus)
Mercury scene	{	Speech (serious) Song (Chorus)

	}	Dialogue
		Song (Solo)
		Dance
Dædalus scene		Song (Solo)
	}	Dance
		Song (Solo)
		Dance
Mercury scene	}	Song (Solo and Chorus)
		Dance

A word as to the elaborate stage-arrangements should now be added. Ben Jonson's own stage directions will serve better than a paraphrase:

'The Scene was the Mountain Atlas, who had his top ending in the figure of an old man, his head and beard all hoary, and frost, as if his shoulders were covered with snow: the rest wood and rock. A grove of ivy at his feet. . .

'At this the Grove and Antimask vanished, and the whole Music was discovered, sitting at the foot of the mountain, with Pleasure and Virtue seated above them.

'Here the whole choir of music called the twelve Maskers came forth from the top of the mountain, which then opened. . .

'After which, they danced their last Dance, and returned into the scene, which closed, and was a mountain again, as before.'

There are, however, two pieces of work to which Milton is, in some measure, indebted: Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale* (1595) and Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (probably 1608), in neither of

which is *Comus* a character.\* In the case of the former play, Milton's obligation seems obvious. Some of the important situations in *Comus* are to be found in Peele. The actual play of *The Old Wives' Tale* is preceded by an Induction (cf. *The Taming of the Shrew*). Three men are lost in a wood; to them appears a smith, who takes them to his cottage, where his wife begins to tell them a story of a king's daughter who was stolen away by a conjurer, and the princess's brothers went in search her—at this point in the dame's story the Brothers themselves enter, and act out the story with the other characters in it, while Madge and her guests look on and make occasional comments.

\* As to the characters in *Comus* in general: Milton did not invent Circe; but we need not suppose that he was indebted to every predecessor who had spoken of Circe, from Homer down. Milton found Circe in the *Odyssey*, as did others, and it is only a general likeness to other treatments of Circe that makes us even mention Spenser (*F. Q.* xii. 42-87,—a passage in which the Circe incident is allegorically presented) and Browne, whose *Inner Temple Mask* (1615) contains an antimask of Circe's transformed followers. Browne's mask was not printed until a century and a half afterward, however. The character of the Attendant Spirit is hardly distinctive enough to incite us to a search for an original; and the Lady and her two brothers were living persons. It may be said here,—practically every editor has said it,—that the tradition that the mask grew out of the actual loss of the children in the forest, bears every mark of being apocryphal. The tradition almost certainly grew out of the mask, not the mask out of the tradition.

The play that now follows has many poetic moments, but its plot is rambling and incoherent: the scenes are short and choppy (indeed there is no real division into scenes or acts), and the various threads of the story are not woven together well. The main figure is Sacrapant, a magician who has cast his evil spells over several persons who appear in the plot. He himself can die only by the hand of a dead man, and his charms can be overcome only when his magic 'light' is extinguished. This light he keeps underground in a glass which can be broken only by a woman 'that's neither wife, widow, nor maid.' Sacrapant is the son of Meroe, a witch, from whom he learned

'To change and alter shapes of mortal men.'

More out of love than malice, he has stolen away Delia, the king's daughter, who seems certainly to be very submissive, although Sacrapant declares that from her grow all his sorrows. In search of Delia come her two brothers, whom the sorcerer easily enslaves, and sets to digging, placing them under the goad of Delia, who has been newly charmed into forgetfulness of her relatives. Huanebango, a grotesque braggart knight, accompanied by a clown, Corebus, comes also in search of the 'sore sorcerer and mighty magician' to win 'this lady' (presumably Delia); Sacrapant with a word leaves him lifeless, and strikes Corebus blind.

Eumenides, the lover of Delia, comes last, and succeeds, through the help of the Ghost of Jack. Jack comes into the plot thus:—the churchwarden and the sexton had refused to bury Jack, because he had left no money to defray the expenses of digging a grave; Eumenides, with almost his last penny, pays for the burial; and the grateful ghost accompanies him as a servant, filling his purse for him at the Hostess's inn. Sacrapant had also used his arts upon a young lover, Erestus, whom he changed into a bear by night, and a prophetic old man by day; Venelia, Erestus's wedded wife, going mad in consequence. (This story is unrelated to the story of the abduction of Delia.) When Sacrapant is killed by a dead man's hand (Jack's) the magic light is extinguished by Venelia (neither wife, widow, nor maid). During the play, Erestus gives oracular advice to anyone who will listen to it; and out of this grows a sub-plot: Lampriscus, a discontented neighbor, wants to know what to do with his two daughters, one fair but curst, the other foul. Erestus advises him to send them to the Well of Life, where they shall 'find their fortunes unlooked for.' The daughters, Zantippa and Celanta, proceed to the Well, from which arises a Head, whose mysterious promises are received well and ill by Celanta and Zantippa, respectively. Huanebango, who has been brought to the Well, and restored to life, but not to hearing, is won by the fair but ill-spoken Zantippa; and the blind Corebus

is captivated by the affable but ugly Celanta. Twice, Harvestmen, who have nothing to do with the story, pass across the empty stage, singing.

It will be seen that this play, as a whole, has not very much in common with *Comus*; but that there is nevertheless a relationship: mainly, of course, in the situation of a lady in the power of an enchanter, from whose power she is rescued by magical assistance. Incidentally, the two brothers; the man who gives advice, and the spirit who gives supernatural aid; and an address to Echo: are common to the two dramas. Entirely aside from the non-related parts, which comprise most of Peele's play, the common parts have points of unlikeness: the enchanter does not tempt the lady; she does not resist his orders; the brothers do not free her; Jack is seeking to help Eumenides rather than to free Delia; the sorcerer is killed; the release of those bound by the charm is not a supernatural doing; the one who advises the brothers is not the one who gives supernatural aid; the brothers speak, not sing, to Echo.

Milton's plot is a better piece of mechanism, and shows better the relation of cause and effect, than does Peele's plot, but the latter moves faster and accomplishes more, as is sufficiently shown by the fact that *Comus* has 1032 lines, against 964 in *The Old Wives' Tale* (Bullen's edition).

A scheme of the plot will show all of the similarities and many of the differences;

- Induction. { Three men lost in a wood. *The Lady and her Brothers are lost in a wood.*  
Madge tells two of them the story of Delia and Sacrapant.
- { DELIA (resembles the Lady but slightly), who is *carried away to Sacrapant's home. In search of her come—*  
her TWO BROTHERS (not like the Brothers of the Lady). They are enslaved by Sacrapant, goaded by Delia (under effect of a potion). All three *released when spell is broken.* *The Lady is led away by Comus. Her Brothers search for her. The Lady is released by Sabrina.*
- SACRAPANT (who only slightly resembles Comus), has worked his spells upon { EUMENIDES, her lover, who employs Ghost of Jack (barest resemblance to Attendant Spirit), *by whose aid Sacrapant is overcome and killed. Eumenides wins Delia.* *Comus is overcome by aid of Attendant Spirit, but escapes.*
- { HUANE BANGO, who is struck dead by Sacrapant, but afterward is revived, and becomes husband of Zantippa. His clown, Corcebus, becomes husband of Celanta.
- { ERESTUS (only slightly resembles Attendant Spirit). Changed into an old man by day, a bear by night. Advises passers-by. Finally restored to his wife, VENELIA, who has been driven mad. She breaks the glass, extinguishes the light, and thus *breaks the charm.* *Sabrina breaks the charm.*
- { LAMPRISCUS, whose two daughters, at Erestus' advice, are sent to the Well, where they win husbands.
- Outside of the baleful influence of Sacrapant are { THE CHURCHWARDEN and SEXTON, who refuse to bury Jack's body.
- { THE HOSTESS, who prepares dinner for Eumenides.
- { THE HARVESTMEN, who sing two songs.

Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* was written about 1608, and was revived in 1633. What Mil-

ton may have owed to this 'pastoral tragi-comedy' is rather a question of style and of underlying spirit than of incident; although the river god's rescue of the wounded virgin who has been flung into the stream to drown, and the aid rendered virgins in distress by the shepherdess who knows how to prepare simples against hurts and evil charms, resemble clearly Sabrina's rescue of the Lady. The entire pastoral, most of it charming, consists of variations on one theme, the praise of virginity and chaste love; and this, of course, is closely akin to the theme of *Comus*, which deals, however, with but one phase of the subject, the power of chastity to protect itself from evil, and does not touch upon the subject of love at all. Several ideas, comparisons, and expressions in *The Faithful Shepherdess*, and at least one passage of some length, find an echo\* in *Comus*. The last two hundred lines of the mask resemble the beautifully cadenced Fletcherian verse, and hold their own in comparison with it.

The barest outline of the story of the play will suffice, as the details of its plot could have given Milton but little assistance. Clorin, a shepherdess, faithful to the memory of her dead lover, dwells by his tomb, and gathers herbs of virtuous powers, thereby to cure those who need her ministrations. The love affairs of the shepherds and shepherdesses

\* Cf. *F. S. I. i.* 111-127 and *Com.* 420-437; *F. S. I. i.* 29-40 and *Com.* 620-628; *F. S. I. i.* 58-61 and *Com.* 265-268.



run in varying fortune through the play, and those who are chaste or chastened are aided by Clorin's 'virgin's hand.' Amoret, a shepherdess loved by Perigot, has undeserved ill-fortune, and twice is wounded and restored to health, finally coming safely to her lover. It is she whom the river god rescues. The other characters, good and bad, but all lovers, come to their proper fate. Not in plot, then, but in general theme, the play and the mask have something in common; evidently Milton had read carefully the beautiful pastoral play of Fletcher's.

One may sum up by saying that Milton's indebtedness to his predecessors was not very great. The deepest thought of *Comus* was his own; from Puteanus he may have gained a fertile suggestion for a chief character; from Peele an incident or two; from Fletcher a stirring impulse toward the poetic treatment of a somewhat similar subject; from Browne's mask a hint for an antimask; from Spenser a warrant for such allegorical treatment as might be desired; and from Jonson's mask practically nothing. *Comus* is essentially Milton's own; there is no bodily transference of good things that belong to someone else: but there is a working over of a not unfamiliar situation, and a complete transmutation of all the material into a new whole that means Milton in faults and virtues both, but virtues most.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASK.

The mask is a form of entertainment, in part dramatic, but having as its main feature dancing, with music, poetry, elaborate costuming, and spectacular effects, as highly important accessories. Two main sources may have nearly equally contributed to its splendor: the English mummings and disguisings, and the Italian spectacles involving pastoral poetry, allegory and elaborate properties. The word mask itself seems to be Arabic,—meaning originally a jester, a masquerader,—coming into English through the Italian. At a time when the word was establishing itself in English usage Ben Jonson rather contemptuously hints that it is only a fashionable way of speaking of disguisings. Let us look briefly at these two strains, English and Italian, which doubtless have united in the mask, whose perfect form shows best in Jonson himself.

As early as the fourteenth century England seems to have had memorable entertainments, participated in by persons in fancy dress. The exact nature of these affairs we do not know. Doubtless they took place upon festivals of one sort or another, when the change from conventional dress would add brightness and gayety to the occasion; and doubtless, too, dancing was a part of the festivity. Such disguisings probably implied no masks (*vizors*), but only fancy dress. Toward the beginning of the

next century there were also dumb shows in costume, performed in honor of royalty, and accompanied, undoubtedly, by a good deal of display. Things of this sort are very simple in nature, and very crude as a matter of art; but they indicate a tendency, apart from drama, to combine merry-making with spectacular effect,—and this means in time a taste for what we now call private theatricals, a taste that almost explains the seventeenth century mask. A fondness for processions, also, is still an English trait, and, in its measure, contributed to the encouragement of unwonted display upon ceremonial occasions. The point to notice, however, is that long before the mask as a form had gained its limited hold in England, there had existed an entertainment involving the persons to be entertained. In other words, those who could afford it had learned to amuse themselves and their guests by the lively and pretty device of dancing in costume, either with or without impersonation. All of this was as yet not literary, or but slightly so. How long it would have taken the costumed dance or the simple dumb-show to develop into a spoken dramatic form is impossible to say. Many of the disguisings may have been part of an evening's entertainment in which an interlude or play was the more elaborate amusement, and a fusion of the two forms of entertainment might have come in time. Undoubtedly disguisings grew in popularity at court and among the nobility, especially in

the time of Henry VIII.; and a literary treatment of them would, in all probability, have ensued.

As it happened, however, the influence of Italy meant, among other things, a transplanting in England of an artistic form, called mask, already further developed than the English disguising. This form appeared in England in the sixteenth century, and grew rapidly in favor because the time was ripe for it. In brief it is the old story of a natural development pointing pretty directly to a certain result, and the arrival, from the outside, of a suitable form which immediately absorbs the tendency and gives to the product a vogue whose credit belongs perhaps equally to the old tendency and to the new form. It is more or less futile to try to apportion the exact credit due each force. As elsewhere, so here, the vague desire for the perfect form was evident, the form appeared, the spirit entered it, and the creation lived. Ben Jonson was right when he called mask and disguising synonymous,—right because the mask was nothing entirely new and strange. But others were right too, when they called it Italian, because it was the Italian influence which took the cruder form and, by making it artistic, gave it vogue.

What was the Italian mask then? Simply a much more elaborate and artistic display, which had acquired form and literary quality. The Renaissance had given to Italy an appreciation of beauty that could not be restrained within classic limits. Revi-

vals of Plautine comedy were accompanied by elaborate interlude-dances, and the extraneous thing outshone the essential thing. Entertainments of gorgeous spectacular effect had a wider appeal than more intellectual forms of art; and there developed a species of brilliant show, in the form of a courtly festival allegory (or a moving triumphal procession), which for its adequate interpretation called in the aid of verse. These brilliant affairs, calling for great outlay of money, became the delight of noble families and of municipalities, and were far out of the range of mere private means. They developed faster in Italy than in England, only because of the quicker recognition in the Romance nation of the charm and the artistic possibilities of beautiful spectacle.

So it was, doubtless, as a much admired and extravagant fashion that the Italian mask,—vizard, dance, costume, stage mechanism and all,—was transplanted to England: only a disguising, but yet a disguising far more brilliant and well ordered than the native one. Here was, indeed, an opportunity for wealthy noblemen who were not to be limited by mere expense when a seemingly new pleasure was ready to be added to the court-life of merry England.

It was a graft on a congenial stock, for England also had its artist. Ben Jonson saw and seized the possibilities of the mask and made it a thing of literature,—thus saving it, indeed; for as an enter-

tainment it could never be popular, in the real sense of the word. It was for the few, and a thing of the passing moment; by a rare insight and power Jonson wrote it for the few and for the moment, but did it so well that his masks remain, not as entertainments, but as literature for the many and for no brief time.

But the species could not last. It was essentially artificial,—supplying a passing pleasure, not a real need. Having no wide range, it must have become monotonous in time, and once dropped could hardly be revived. A simpler reason disposed of it in England, however: the time of the Commonwealth was no time for extravagant expenditures for the sake of complimenting any man. But the mask as a species could not have developed in any event. So far as it was an amateur production (and in most part it was), so far its possibilities were limited. For the form, slight as it was, demanded that its presenters act, sing, and dance. In a mild way these things are easy; but so long as they are made easy, so long there can be no pushing of the form's capabilities to their limit. This could only be attained by excellent acting, singing, dancing; and these things together few amateurs are fully capable of.

And if the presentation had become professional, instead of remaining *in statu quo*, a still more curious result would have been manifested. For a professional would pretty surely have developed one

of these arts, not all, and the presenters would in time have sacrificed one accomplishment and then another to the final one, which would have been fully developed. What would the mask have then become? If the professional performers had developed dancing, the ballet; if singing, the opera; if acting, the drama. Thus the composite form is shown to be in a state of arrested development, with no real chance of growth. And such a form, after all, can never be a perfect expression of the greatest genius.

#### COMUS AS A MASK.

All masks are not alike, and a definition must depend partly upon the elements of those entertainments that go by the name of mask; and partly upon the purpose of a mask as revealed by a study of its historical development. We find then that dancing seems to be the basis of the entertainment, and that spectacular display, singing, poetry, and dramatic incident serve in their ways to bring out the full grace and meaning of the occasion. The occasion we find to be not one of mere general amusement, but usually one of particular honor to some one person. Those who took the graceful parts in the mask were themselves guests of the occasion, but professional actors were sometimes called in to play the comic or grotesque parts in the antimask. A mask ought obviously not to be too dramatic,—that is, a vivid treatment of a strong

dramatic situation would be out of keeping with the pleasantly artificial, not to say dilettante, air of the whole thing. The elements of a mask are these,—dancing, beautiful costumes and stage settings, singing, acting of not too strenuous a type, and the compliment, either expressed or implied, to the honored person.

The subjects best fitted for this sort of thing were obviously those that permitted the necessary allegory, which might be slight or deep, but must be obvious; and such subjects were readily found in conventional mythology and pastoral poetry. The stock figures of Greek mythology and some of the figures of pastoral idyls found, therefore, place in the mask, and convenient personifications not classical even more readily came into the *dramatis personæ*. Variety and novelty were gained rather through new dances, new costumes, new scenery, new music, than through new conceptions of the nature and purpose of the species. Indeed, the spirit of it all,—that of courtly compliment,—had perforce to remain essentially the same. New names and new subjects, of course, there constantly were, but even these could not materially alter the real tendency of the story. Ultimately the needed variety was given by the introduction of a new and seemingly incongruous element. The antimask \*

\* Various derived from *ante-mask*, a preliminary mask; *anti-mask*, a foil-mask; and *antick-mask*, a mask of anticks. The second and third derivations are more probable than the first.



was a more or less grotesque dance of strange or comic personages, with or without appropriate dialogue and song. The costumes and characters were at first all alike; but variety soon came in here as well. The range of this new part of the mask was very great, of course; some of it is mere buffoonery; some of it is excellent comedy; and while all of it is lower in tone, grace, and beauty than the actual mask, in variety, novelty, and jollity, it doubtless proved its right to exist. That the anti-mask need have no integral relation to the rest of the plot is both for and against the new addition, which gave a wider variety at the expense of unity of effect.

The poet's share in all this, is, as seems obvious, not exactly the lion's share: a mask might fairly well accomplish its purpose even if its poetry were poor—the genial mood of the spectators would take the spirit at more than face value; on the other hand a charming poetic framework would not be enough to give success to an ill-mounted spectacle. Ben Jonson, in asserting the real claim of the poet to the first place, spoke with the ardor of an artist who loves his art, and set forth an ideal which he himself could live up to. But in all seriousness it must be admitted that the exigencies of the masks do not require as good poetry as Jonson put into them; that he gave overflowing measure of poetical quality is sheer gain. If Shirley's mask, *The Triumph of Peace*, is stupid to read, it must, neverthe-

less, have been gorgeous to see and hear, and probably thoroughly satisfied all but a few of the spectators. Jonson's masks were varied enough in appeal to hit the general taste; beyond and above that, the peculiarly beautiful poetry of them must have made its appeal to the finest taste in his audiences. He gave more than the artistic species required, without being able essentially to develop the species itself. But nothing beautiful is wasted if it can be saved beyond the moment for which it was too good: Jonson's masks are a part of permanent literature.

Is *Comus* a good mask? It has been praised by most persons as the best of all the masks. This estimate, one may say immediately, is inaccurate and indiscriminating. That *Comus* contains loftier poetry than may be found in other masks is doubtless true; but that this makes it a better mask does not follow. It is a good mask, beyond question, for it has the main elements of the mask, and has them in a proportion not unfitting to the occasion. The dances are sufficiently varied,—a graceful dance of those of noble birth, an antimask of *Comus's* crew, and a dance of villagers—in reality a second antimask; the songs are varied, although there is no chorus where one might be looked for (at the rustic festivities); the costuming presents good opportunities, the actual masking admirable opportunities; the three stage settings,—of the wood, the palace, and the peculiarly effective presen-

tation of a view outside of the castle itself within which the performance took place,—give excellent scope to the scenic artist; the antimask grows naturally out of the mask itself; and the direct compliment to the Earl and the implied compliment of the whole mask are effectively made. Add to these things the charm of beautiful poetry and beautiful music, and we have many things to the credit of the mask *Comus*.

On the other hand, it is equally obvious that *Comus* lacks liveliness, and makes its moral over-emphatic, so far as artistic purposes are concerned. The speeches may have dragged a little in spite of their noble poetry. One may safely say then, that *Comus* is a good mask, but not an ideal one, not as good a mask as are several of Jonson's; but that if it had been a better mask it would have been by so much the less the *Comus* we have learned to care for. Milton's mask was nobler than the occasion demanded; but fortunate the literature whose producers do more than is asked. To make real literature is an ample reward for having evaded perfect success in a partly non-literary species.

In saying that *Comus* is not as sprightly a mask as are Jonson's (and this is its main defect), one is not repeating the old charge that *Comus* is not essentially dramatic. It is not essentially dramatic, indeed, but there is no reason why it should be. In looking at the dramatic structure of *Comus* then, our purpose is as much to perceive how far a mask

may ignore dramatic values, as to see how far it observes them. In this way, it may be said in passing, we may not only understand a mask better, but may more fully realize just what has been accomplished by a playwright who works in the purely dramatic field. If we understand how little was required of Milton we may appreciate how much was required of Shakspeare.

The plan of *Comus* is simple; adequate to afford dramatic opportunities, if these are desired, but not demanding dramatic treatment if this is not desired. The difference between a truly dramatic treatment and a semi-dramatic or non-dramatic treatment, lies not merely in making the scenes vividly interesting or exciting, but also, and perhaps chiefly, in providing adequate motives for all that happens. To make an interesting incident seem natural and effective, and to lead up to it convincingly, is to come to the heart of dramatic action. So far as pure dramatic treatment is concerned, Milton contents himself with making a situation fairly plausible, without making its climax inevitable, or exhausting its dramatic possibilities. In other words, he treats his subject as a mask and not as a drama; he makes a good mask and not a perfect one; and seizes an opportunity for the charming poetic utterance of a favorite doctrine, not immediately determined by the occasion, nor even unusually appropriate to it. The thing that is before him to do, he does well; the thing that was not before him, he does superbly.

The plot of *Comus* involves several situations which Milton easily states rather than logically leads up to; whose general bearing he makes clear, but whose detailed and separate dramatic moments he makes little attempt to exploit. For example, the Lady is alone, as she must be, in order to make possible the following scene with Comus; but why is the Lady alone? Milton's reason, that both brothers have gone in search of relief, is not a good one unless we are to regard the brothers as thoughtless; but obviously we are not expected so to regard them, and so the Lady's solitariness is not dramatically justified. We are ready to take the situation for granted only because we are not inquisitive as to motives in a mask. Again, the song of the Lady, to take a moment within this scene, is explained readily by the lady herself:

'I cannot hallo to my brothers, but  
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest  
I'll venture.'

This is entirely satisfactory in a mask, of course: we are ready to hear a song, and here is an opportunity to put one in. But if it were a drama, we should ask: Does any girl sing when, being in danger, she wishes to call for aid? Does she so easily satisfy herself that there is no danger? Is singing heard farther than a cry? Would this particular song have been improvised by one in such a position? In asking these questions, which are, of

course, absurd to ask, my purpose is not to show Milton in the least at fault, but to indicate that this situation, which passes unnoticed in *Comus*, would not pass unnoticed in *Romeo and Juliet*, and that therefore a mask has not the same requirements that a drama has. So far then from being at fault, Milton is quite right in going to no more trouble to prove his case than his auditors require. In a fairy tale, 'Once upon a time' sufficiently dates the story; in an anecdote of real life this easy and convenient chronology will not serve. All of this is perhaps too patent to discuss; but it seems worth while to show that the only partly dramatic method of *Comus* is entirely reasonable as the method of a mask.

The opening speech of the mask *Comus* is addressed mainly to the audience, and is epic in character, rather than dramatic: that is, the Attendant Spirit tells us things that could have been brought out in action. Compare with this the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, which shows in visible action the quarreling houses of Montague and Capulet. To make the contrast sharper, note the speech of Chorus before the Shakespearean play begins—it is interesting, but unnecessary; and very tame in comparison with the movement of the first scene itself. Now the opening of *Comus* is in the manner of the extra-dramatic Chorus, not in the manner of the dramatic scene. Note again the beginning of *Julius Cæsar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*;

the things that it is necessary for us to know immediately are presented in dialogue and action, not in mere narrative monologue. Even where Shakespeare begins with a monologue, as he does in *Richard III.*, he uses it to reveal character, not to take the place of action, which speedily follows in vivid dialogue.\* This opening speech of *Comus* is typical of the whole mask,—slow moving, only slightly dramatic, charmingly conceived, beautifully worded,—poetry carelessly wearing the drama's robe but not assuming the drama's functions.

One other situation may be discussed briefly,—the Lady has been freed from the power of Comus and released from her 'fixed and motionless' position, through the several efforts of the Brothers, the Attendant Spirit, and the nymph Sabrina. But although she had with splendid moral and intellectual power resisted the enticements of Comus, the Lady has now lapsed into a mere puppet without a word to say in the rest of the mask. A long speech of gratitude would undoubtedly be tedious at this point in the plot, but from the dramatic point of view, the Lady's utter silence seems an inadequate treatment of the situation.\* But the mask comes the more

\* The formal opening speech, or prologue, is often, however, a satisfying part of Greek drama, which, owing to the continuous presence of the chorus later, needed an opportunity to present compactly things that could not readily be uttered in the presence of the chorus.

† *Comus*, 942-3, suggests a reason, which, however, is not adequate.

readily to its cheerful end, and who has noticed—much less lamented—the strange reticence of her whose words a short minute before even Comus had felt were ‘set off by some superior power’?

## SAMSON AGONISTES.

The dramatic structure of *Samson Agonistes*, imitating, as it does, the structure of a Greek drama, is necessarily severer and compacter, though not necessarily more complicated, than that of *Comus*. And inasmuch as, quite apart from the subject-matter, a Greek tragedy is a far more serious form of art than is a mask, the standard of constructive technique that Milton has set for himself is perforce a high one; and it makes more difference if he does not attain it, both in general plan and in detail. That the main situation as it stands in Milton’s general conception is ample and lofty enough to meet the needs of the form, there can be no real doubt. The magnitude of the issue, the depth of the suffering, the strength and sweep of the passion,—these are qualities that both in seriousness and importance fitly place *Samson Agonistes* in a form of art that gave adequate scope to the genius of Sophocles. Of course, the immense difference will always remain, that to the Greek tragic dramatists the choral tragedy was a practicable art,—the dramas were written to be acted,—while to Milton the form was one of past greatness, not, save in a



spiritual sense, a form of present dramatic possibilities.

Practically, such a difference works out in this way: those who wrote when the art flourished accommodated their work to what had to be; reconstructors of an antique form accommodate their work to their notions of what must have been. Almost inevitably in the re-creation, the vitality of the form itself is impaired, although the vitality of the underlying spirit may not essentially suffer. The mechanical points in the form may be observed, but the stimulus that a living form gives is lacking. In imitating the virtues of a bygone species, an artist uses no small part of his energy in the mere adherence to rule, in the avoidance of faults; the very nature of the case prohibits him from attempting that supreme thing in literary creation, the invention of new possibilities in the form of expression he happens to be using. To attempt more than imitation with the form, without the possibility of practical test of its efficiency, is to direct one's force into the air. And this, therefore, makes one's particular success lie in some one else's formula, and not in one's own. Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, each made the mere form he used do more for him than it had done for others; at best, Milton in *Samson Agonistes* could only imitate the best form that some one else had established. It is safe to say, then, that a perfect poise of great thought and great form may hardly

be looked for in any reconstruction. The spontaneity of the living form is absent, and even wonderful dexterity of an imitative kind cannot give to the world the best that a creative genius has to utter.

There is, perhaps, but one exception to this general proposition, and that is when a great artist makes subjective self expression his essential theme,\* and yet wishes to veil his expression, for fear its literal meaning be too widely and too dangerously apprehended; and hence uses a past form, half symbolically, rather than a present or a new form. In such a case the effort of the artist is partly to say a thing indirectly, and therefore that

\* The personal interest that the reader of *Samson Agonistes* feels in its author is peculiarly great. No one who knows the essential facts of Milton's life can fail to feel the deep likeness, as well as the superficial resemblance, between the latter days of Samson and of Milton, 'blind among enemies.' The episode of Dalila, too, albeit in a much less edifying way, recalls vividly Milton's unfortunate first marriage. This personal interest, however, should not be allowed to make an allegory of the drama, although here and there a passage has a double meaning. Nor on the other hand should this personal element be ignored. The simple fact is that the poet chose a subject that in itself called for the expression of the deepest personal emotions he himself had experienced; and in writing of them, therefore, he spoke with unmistakable passion. The drama is the better for it, and our appreciation not less because we know the secret. In a word, without regarding *Samson Agonistes* as something written to elucidate Milton's life, we may think of Milton's life as elucidating his drama.

expression well suits, which enables him to avoid completely committing himself and yet speaks clearly enough to posterity or to a few. I believe that Milton may have so conceived *Samson Agonistes*; that he did not intend, as did Mathew Arnold in *Merope*, to present a Greek tragedy in English, but that he chose the Greek tragic form, because it best of all the literary forms of the world had once given scope to the stern and spiritual tragedy of man in the hands of inevitable Fate. Thus, and perhaps thus only, the antique expression might again poignantly speak new things while seeming but to revive magnificently the things that had long ago perfectly been said. All this, of course, does not essentially affect the general proposition; it merely leads us again to the old truth that the form must serve the thought. My point was, that no writer can make an obsolete form live again *as a form*, because art, after all, is passionately practical, and craves immediate results; but that, nevertheless, a great writer may speak in a bygone form and say things that are out of the scope of the form itself. Thus *Samson Agonistes* as a Greek tragedy is a great piece of work, but not a supreme piece of Greek tragedy, as such; but, also, *Samson Agonistes* may be a supreme personal and poetic utterance, which happened to be spoken in the large Greek cadence.

But regardless of the ultimate purpose of the drama, the question of the dramatic construction

of *Samson Agonistes* must be considered. The Greek tragic formula is essentially dramatic, although not exhaustive. It eliminates many non-dramatic elements, without giving scope to all the possible dramatic opportunities. Even a superficial contrasting of the Greek and the Elizabethan methods will indicate clearly, even if not exactly, the way in which Greek tragedy chooses a few things instead of many, and develops them severely instead of freely. The dramatic movement of Greek tragedy does not express itself primarily in visible action. Visible the characters are, of course, but we hear their motives and learn the final results of these motives, rather than see the process of the deeds themselves. It is the spiritual interpretation of outward action, rather than actual outward action inviting our own interpretation. Not to attempt a closer analysis, it may be said that this inward action is expressed in a few scenes of concentrated dialogue, each scene (or act) dealing adequately with some all-important phase of the complete action. The method involves, obviously, comparatively little action, but requires that this action shall be absolutely organic.

The dramatic structure of *Samson Agonistes*, therefore, may be held to be satisfactory, if it develops a true dramatic movement (independent of visible deeds or actions) by making all the stages of that movement vital, whether they be visible deeds or the no less tangible spiritual accomplish-

ment. It is not necessary that there be a sequence of outward events, but it is necessary that there be an organic growth of spiritual passion. Does *Samson Agonistes* fulfil this condition?

It is upon this point, needless to say to any one who has glanced at Miltonic criticism, that argument pro and con has been urged. Johnson objected \* that 'nothing passes between the first act and the last, that either hastens or delays the death of Samson'; and that therefore the play had a beginning and end, but no middle.† To which Cumberland replied‡ that the middle was supplied by the announcement of the festival of Dagon (434-37), the prophecy of Dagon's overthrow (468-71) and the motive for Harapha's share in the catastrophe (1250-1252).

As these two views practically represent the two sides, it will be well to examine the matter more closely. This is obvious: very little happens in outward events. Samson appears; then the Chorus, then Manoa, then Dalila, then Harapha, all of whom talk to Samson, without action; the Officer comes in with the mandate of the lords, which Samson resists and then acquiesces in (this is action, although not of vivid dramatic quality); then Samson withdraws, and later the Messenger announces the thrilling tidings of his death. How far does the intermediate dialogue between the first appearance of the

\* *Rambler*, 139.

† Cf. Aristotle, *Poet.* vii. 3.

‡ *Observer*, iv.

protagonist, and the Messenger's speech help toward the catastrophe? With all the will in the world to differ with Dr. Johnson in Miltonic criticism, I find myself, nevertheless, in substantial agreement with him so far as his immediate point is concerned. It seems to me that Cumberland's answer is, on the whole, a weak one; if it actually be that Milton used Harapha's hatred to bring about the Philistian mandate, then Milton was strangely inartistic in leaving the vital dramatic point of Harapha's scene unuttered, save by the Chorus after Harapha has left, and then in the form of a mere guess. If this be the logical "middle" of a great tragedy, it is left absurdly in the dark, unemphatic, indefinite. And the other two points are mere statements,—one a prophecy,—which do not dramatically help on the action. The scene with Dalila,—indeed all the scenes,—gives no forward dramatic impulse to the sequence of events in the plot. The commentators, therefore, who pin their faith to the three slight statements as furnishing a dramatic middle to the action are resting their case upon a device that at best would only show Milton an inartistic handler of plot.

Much better is the case of those who, dropping the question of plot, urge the value of the intermediate scenes as an interpretation of character. But portrayal of character, of course, is only partly dramatic. To be wholly dramatic, a play must indicate character through plot.

My own notion is that Milton has really succeeded by a plan (conscious or unconscious with him) which has imparted a true dramatic movement by the very negation of positive action. In other words, each one of the seemingly undramatic scenes in *Samson Agonistes* represents a thwarted action. Dalila and Harapha each seek to throw Samson in another direction; so Manoa. It is by resisting this movement that Samson, seemingly therefore stationary, actually moves forward dramatically toward the climax. Instead of a character moving forward, against an immovable background, the background retreats and the stationary character at the end of the shifting is, by so much, nearer the visible end of the way. But the analogy is not a perfect one; it is best to stick to the fact itself. The first scene with the Chorus establishes Samson in the position in which his opening soliloquy placed him: the Chorus's 'apt words' have no 'power to swage the tumors of a troubled mind'; they bring neither 'counsel' nor 'consolation' that actually reconciles Samson to his failures. And this is the Chorus's only resource. The scene with Manoa reveals Manoa's fear that 'A worse thing yet remains'—the 'popular feast' of the Philistines in honor of the triumph of Dagon over God; but Samson, at the lowest ebb of his grief, yet declares that 'Dagon must stoop.' Then Manoa proposes the ransom, which Samson rejects as futile. Although Manoa ultimately seems to come near to accomplish-

ing this purpose, it never receives full Philistian approval, and thus, unaccepted by the Philistines, and rejected by Samson, it is a thwarted action. The scene with Dalila more conspicuously works to a similar end: Dalila's attempt at reconciliation is utterly contemned. The scene with Harapha discloses not indeed a specific action averted, but does show unmistakably a project that fails: Harapha, coming to view Samson and to rejoice over the discomfiture of the Nazarite, is himself discomfited, and retires morally the loser in the war of words. Thus then the forces that have endeavored to console, to relieve, to cajole, to insult, the fallen hero, find him steadfast in his distrust of himself and in his trust in his own God. The thwarted actions have made Samson more than ever a solitary figure, to whom only divine aid can restore the final salvation. And therefore, life presenting nothing but defeat, death offers the ultimate victory. Samson comes to his own at the very end, in fulfilling the divine purpose. This is the spiritual climax toward which the whole play, seemingly motionless, has been steadily advancing. In the presence of this inner movement, the lack of outer movement counts for nothing. Milton, with a finer artistic sense than that possessed by his defenders or apologists, has given us in this drama a great crisis adequately led up to from an unmistakable opening situation. In this sense, the drama has a beginning and an end, and a middle far more important than



that indicated by stray words which may or may not have brought about a new incident in the plot. The structure of the drama is adequate to accomplish its purpose.

*Samson Agonistes*, the work of his old age, is Milton's last great message to the world, as *Comus* was his first. Together they declare fitly the poet's great doctrine of living. How to face life with a pure heart, how to meet death unvanquished by evil, these things the beautiful mask and the stern tragedy unmistakably teach. Such a message one might expect from him who served

'As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.'

## DATES IN MILTON'S LIFE.

1608. Born in London, 9 December.  
1620-4. At St. Paul's school.  
1625-32. At Christ's College, Cambridge  
1632-8. At Horton.  
1634. *Comus* presented.  
1637. *Lycidas* published.  
1638-9. Traveled in Italy.  
1639. Returned to live in London.  
1643. Married Mary Powell (d. 1653 or 1654).  
1644. *Areopagitica* published.  
1645. Collection of minor poems published.  
1649. Appointed Latin Secretary to the Council.  
1651. *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* published.  
1652. Blindness became complete.  
1654. *Joannis Miltoni Angli pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda* published.  
1656. Married Catharine Woodstock (d. 1658).  
1660. The Restoration.  
1663. Married Elizabeth Minshull.  
1667. *Paradise Lost* published.  
1671. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* published.  
1673. Second edition of poems published in 1645.  
1674. Died in London, 8 November.



# LYRIC AND DRAMATIC POEMS OF JOHN MILTON.

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## A PARAPHRASE ON PSALM CXIV.

*This and the following Psalm were done by the Author at fifteen years old.*

WHEN the blest seed of Terah's faithful son  
After long toil their liberty had won,  
And passed from Pharian fields to Canaan land,  
Led by the strength of the Almighty's hand,  
Jehovah's wonders were in Israel shown,                   5  
His praise and glory was in Israel known.  
That saw the troubled sea, and shivering fled,  
And sought to hide his froth-becurlèd head  
Low in the earth; Jordan's clear streams recoil,  
As a faint host that hath received the foil.                   10  
The high huge-bellied mountains skip like rams  
Amongst their ewes, the little hills like lambs.  
Why fled the ocean? and why skipped the moun-  
tains?  
Why turnèd Jordan toward his crystal fountains?  
Shake, Earth, and at the presence be aghast                   15  
Of Him that ever was and aye shall last,  
That glassy floods from rugged rocks can crush,  
And make soft rills from fiery flint-stones gush.

## PSALM CXXXVI.

- LET us with a gladsome mind  
Praise the Lord, for he is kind;  
For his mercies aye endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.
- Let us blaze his name abroad, 5  
For of gods he is the God;  
For his, &c.
- O let us his praises tell, 9  
That doth the wrathful tyrants quell;  
For his, &c.
- That with his miracles doth make 13  
Amazèd heaven and earth to shake;  
For his, &c.
- That by his wisdom did create 17  
The painted heavens so full of state;  
For his, &c.
- That did the solid earth ordain 21  
To rise above the watery plain;  
For his, &c.
- That by his all-commanding might 25  
Did fill the new-made world with light;  
For his, &c.

*PSALM CXXXVI.*

	3
And caused the golden-tressèd sun All the day long his course to run; For his, &c.	29
The hornèd moon to shine by night Amongst her spangled sisters bright; For his, &c.	33
He with his thunder-clasping hand Smote the first-born of Egypt land; For his, &c.	37
And, in despite of Pharaoh fell, He brought from thence his Israel; For his, &c.	41
The ruddy waves he cleft in twain Of the Erythræan main; For his, &c.	45
The floods stood still, like walls of glass, While the Hebrew bands did pass; For his, &c.	49
But full soon they did devour The tawny king with all his power; For his, &c.	53
His chosen people he did bless In the wasteful wilderness; For his, &c.	57

- In bloody battle he brought down                    61  
Kings of prowess and renown;  
    For his, &c.
- He foiled bold Seon and his host,                    65  
That ruled the Amorrean coast;  
    For his, &c.
- And large limbed Og he did subdue,                69  
With all his over-hardy crew;  
    For his, &c.
- And to his servant Israel                                73  
He gave their land, therein to dwell;  
    For his, &c.
- He hath with a piteous eye                            77  
Beheld us in our misery;  
    For his, &c.
- And freed us from the slavery                         81  
Of the invading enemy;  
    For his, &c.
- All living creatures he doth feed,                 85  
And with full hand supplies their need;  
    For his, &c.
- Let us therefore warble forth                         89  
His mighty majesty and worth;  
    For his, &c.

*DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT.* 5

That his mansion hath on high, 93  
Above the reach of mortal eye;  
For his mercies aye endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.

ON THE DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT  
DYING OF A COUGH.

*Anno ætatis 17.*

I

O FAIREST flower, no sooner blown but blasted,  
Soft silken primrose fading timelessly,  
Summer's chief honour, if thou hadst outlasted  
Bleak Winter's force that made thy blossom dry;  
For he, being amorous on that lovely dye 5  
That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss,  
But killed, alas! and then bewailed his fatal bliss.

II

For since grim Aquilo, his charioteer,  
By boisterous rape the Athenian damsel got, 10  
He thought it touched his deity full near,  
If likewise he some fair one wedded not,  
Thereby to wipe away the infamous blot  
Of long-uncoupled bed and childless eld,  
Which 'mongst the wanton gods a foul reproach  
was held.



## III

So mounting up in icy-pearlèd car, 15  
 Through middle empire of the freezing air  
 He wandered long, till thee he spied from far;  
 There ended was his quest, there ceased his care:  
 Down he descended from his snow-soft chair,  
 But all unwares with his cold-kind embrace 20  
 Unhoused thy virgin soul from her fair biding-  
 place.

## IV

Yet art thou not inglorious in thy fate;  
 For so Apollo, with unweeting hand,  
 Whilom did slay his dearly-lovèd mate,  
 Young Hyacinth, born on Eurotas' strand, 25  
 Young Hyacinth, the pride of Spartan land;  
 But then transformed him to a purple flower:  
 Alack, that so to change thee Winter had no power!

## V

Yet can I not persuade me thou art dead,  
 Or that thy corse corrupts in earth's dark womb, 30  
 Or that thy beauties lie in wormy bed,  
 Hid from the world in a low-delvèd tomb;  
 Could Heaven, for pity, thee so strictly doom?  
 Oh no! for something in thy face did shine  
 Above mortality, that showed thou wast divine. 35

## VI

Resolve me, then, O Soul most surely blest  
 (If so it be that thou these plaints dost hear!)  
 Tell me, bright Spirit, where'er thou hoverest,  
 Whether above that high first-moving sphere,  
 Or in the Elysian fields (if such there were), 40  
 Oh, say me true if thou wert mortal wight,  
 And why from us so quickly thou didst take thy  
 flight.

## VII

Wert thou some star which from the ruined roof  
 Of shaked Olympus by mischance didst fall;  
 Which careful Jove in nature's true behoof 45  
 Took up, and in fit place did reinstall?  
 Or did of late Earth's sons besiege the wall  
 Of sheeny Heaven, and thou some goddess fled  
 Amongst us here below to hide thy nectared head?

## VIII

Or wert thou that just maid who once before 50  
 Forsook the hated earth, oh! tell me sooth,  
 And cam'st again to visit us once more?  
 Or wert thou [Mercy,] that sweet smiling youth?  
 Or that crowned matron, sage white-robed Truth?  
 Or any other of that heavenly brood 55  
 Let down in cloudy throne to do the world some  
 good?

## IX

Or wert thou of the golden-wingèd host,  
 Who having clad thyself in human weed,  
 To earth from thy prefixèd seat didst post,  
 And after short abode fly back with speed, 60  
 As if to show what creatures Heaven doth breed;  
     Thereby to set the hearts of men on fire  
 To scorn the sordid world, and unto Heaven aspire?

## X

But oh! why didst thou not stay here below  
 To bless us with thy heaven-loved innocence, 65  
 To slake his wrath whom sin hath made our foe,  
 To turn swift-rushing black perdition hence,  
 Or drive away the slaughtering pestilence,  
     To stand 'twixt us and our deservèd smart?  
 But thou canst best perform that office where thou  
     art. 70

## XI

Then thou, the mother of so sweet a child,  
 Her false-imagined loss cease to lament,  
 And wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild;  
 Think what a present thou to God hast sent,  
 And render him with patience what he lent: 75  
     This if thou do, he will an offspring give  
 That till the world's last end shall make thy name  
     to live.

AT A VACATION EXERCISE IN THE COLLEGE, PART  
LATIN, PART ENGLISH.

*Anno aetatis 19.*

*The Latin speeches ended, the English thus  
began:—*

HAIL, native language, that by sinews weak  
Didst move my first endeavouring tongue to speak,  
And mad'st imperfect words with childish trips,  
Half unpronounced, slide through my infant lips,  
Driving dumb silence from the portal door, 5  
Where he had mutely sat two years before:  
Here I salute thee, and thy pardon ask  
That now I use thee in my latter task!  
Small loss it is that thence can come unto thee;  
I know my tongue but little grace can do thee. 10  
Thou need'st not be ambitious to be first;  
Believe me, I have thither packed the worst:  
And if it happen as I did forecast,  
The daintiest dishes shall be served up last.  
I pray thee then deny me not thy aid, 15  
For this same small neglect that I have made;  
But haste thee straight to do me once a pleasure,  
And from thy wardrobe bring thy chiefest treasure;  
Not those new-fangled toys and trimming slight  
Which takes our late fantastics with delight; 20  
But cull those richest robes and gayest attire,  
Which deepest spirits and choicest wits desire:  
I have some naked thoughts that rove about,

And loudly knock to have their passage out,  
And, weary of their place, do only stay 25  
Till thou hast decked them in thy best array;  
That so they may, without suspect or fears,  
Fly swiftly to this fair assembly's ears.  
Yet I had rather, if I were to choose,  
Thy service in some graver subject use; 30  
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,  
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound;  
Such where the deep transported mind may soar  
Above the wheeling poles, and at heaven's door  
Look in, and see each blissful deity 35  
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,  
Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings  
To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings  
Immortal nectar to her knightly sire;  
Then, passing through the spheres of watchful fire,  
And misty regions of wide air next under, 41  
And hills of snow and lofts of piled thunder,  
May tell at length how green-eyed Neptune raves,  
In heaven's defiance mustering all his waves;  
Then sing of secret things that came to pass 45  
When beldam Nature in her cradle was;  
And last of kings and queens and heroes old,  
Such as the wise Demodocus once told  
In solemn songs at king Alcinous' feast,  
While sad Ulysses' soul and all the rest 50  
Are held, with his melodious harmony,  
In willing chains and sweet captivity.  
But fie, my wandering Muse, how thou dost stray!  
Expectance calls thee now another way:

Thou know'st it must be now thy only bent      55  
To keep in compass of thy Predicament.  
Then quick about thy purposed business come,  
That to the next I may resign my room.

*Then ENS is represented as Father of the Predicaments, his ten sons; whereof the eldest stood for SUBSTANCE with his Canons; which ENS, thus speaking, explains:—*

Good luck befriend thee, son; for at thy birth  
The faery ladies danced upon the hearth.      60  
The drowsy nurse hath sworn she did them spy  
Come tripping to the room where thou didst lie,  
And, sweetly singing round about thy bed,  
Strew all their blessings on thy sleeping head.  
She heard them give thee this, that thou shouldst  
still      65

From eyes of mortals walk invisible.  
Yet there is something that doth force my fear;  
For once it was my dismal hap to hear  
A sibyl old, bow-bent with crooked age,  
That far events full wisely could presage,      70  
And in Time's long and dark prospective-glass  
Foresaw what future days should bring to pass.  
'Your son,' said she, '(nor can you it prevent)  
Shall subject be to many an Accident.  
O'er all his brethren he shall reign as king;      75  
Yet every one shall make him underling,  
And those that cannot live from him asunder  
Ungratefully shall strive to keep him under.

In worth and excellence he shall outgo them,  
 Yet, being above them, he shall be below them. 80  
 From others he shall stand in need of nothing,  
 Yet on his brothers shall depend for clothing,  
 To find a foe it shall not be his hap,  
 And peace shall lull him in her flowery lap;  
 Yet shall he live in strife, and at his door 85  
 Devouring war shall never cease to roar;  
 Yea, it shall be his natural property  
 To harbour those that are at enmity.  
 What power, what force, what mighty spell, if not  
 Your learnèd hands, can loose this Gordian knot?

*The next, QUANTITY and QUALITY, spake in prose;  
 then RELATION was called by his name.*

Rivers, arise! whether thou be the son 91  
 Of utmost Tweed, or Ouse, or gulfy Dun,  
 Or Trent, who like some earth-born giant spreads  
 His thirty arms along the indented meads,  
 Or sullen Mole, that runneth underneath, 95  
 Or Severn swift, guilty of maiden's death,  
 Or rocky Avon, or of sedgy Lea,  
 Or coaly Tyne, or ancient hallowed Dee,  
 Or Humber loud, that keeps the Scythian's name,  
 Or Medway smooth, or royal-towered Thame. 100

*The rest was prose.*

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

*Composed 1629.*

I

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn,  
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,  
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,  
Our great redemption from above did bring;  
For so the holy sages once did sing, 5  
That he our deadly forfeit should release,  
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

II

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,  
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,  
Wherewith he wont at Heaven's high council-table  
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity, 11  
He laid aside; and here with us to be,  
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,  
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal  
clay.

III

Say, Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein 15  
Afford a present to the Infant God?  
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,  
To welcome him to this his new abode,



Now while the heaven, by the sun's team untrod,  
 Hath took no print of the approaching light, 20  
 And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons  
 bright?

## IV

See how from far upon the eastern road  
 The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet!  
 O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,  
 And lay it lowly at his blessed feet; 25  
 Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,  
 And join thy voice unto the angel quire,  
 From out his secret altar touched with hallowed  
 fire.

## THE HYMN.

## I

It was the winter wild,  
 While the heaven-born child 30  
 All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;  
 Nature, in awe to him,  
 Had doffed her gaudy trim,  
 With her great Master so to sympathize:  
 It was no season then for her 35  
 To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

## II

Only with speeches fair  
 She woos the gentle air  
 To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,

*THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.* 15

And on her naked shame, 40  
Pollute with sinful blame,  
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;  
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes  
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

III

But he, her fears to cease, 45  
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace:  
She, crowned with olive green, came softly  
sliding  
Down through the turning sphere,  
His ready harbinger,  
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;  
And waving wide her myrtle wand, 51  
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

IV

No war, or battle's sound,  
Was heard the world around;  
The idle spear and shield were high uphung; 55  
The hookèd chariot stood  
Unstained with hostile blood;  
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng;  
And kings sat still with awful eye,  
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by. 60

V

But peaceful was the night  
Wherein the Prince of Light  
His reign of peace upon the earth began:

The winds, with wonder whist,  
 Smoothly the waters kissed, 65  
     Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,  
 Who now hath quite forgot to rave,  
 While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed  
     wave.

## VI

The stars, with deep amaze,  
 Stand fixed in steadfast gaze, 70  
     Bending one way their precious influence,  
 And will not take their flight,  
 For all the morning light,  
     Or Lucifer that often warned them thence;  
 But in their glimmering orbs did glow, 75  
 Until their Lord himself bespake and bid them go.

## VII

And though the shady gloom  
 Had given day her room,  
     The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,  
 And hid his head for shame, 80  
 As his inferior flame  
     The new-enlightened world no more should  
     need:  
 He saw a greater Sun appear  
 Than his bright throne or burning axletree could  
     bear.

VIII

The shepherds on the lawn, 85  
Or ere the point of dawn,  
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;  
Full little thought they than,  
That the mighty Pan  
Was kindly come to live with them below: 90  
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,  
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

IX

When such music sweet  
Their hearts and ears did greet  
As never was by mortal finger strook, 95  
Divinely-warbled voice  
Answering the stringèd noise,  
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:  
The air, such pleasure loath to lose,  
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly  
close. 100

X

Nature, that heard such sound  
Beneath the hollow round  
Of Cynthia's seat the airy region thrilling,  
Now was almost won  
To think her part was done, 105  
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling:  
She knew such harmony alone  
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

## XI

At last surrounds their sight  
 A globe of circular light, 110  
     That with long beams the shamefaced night  
     arrayed;  
 The helmèd cherubim  
 And sworded seraphim  
     Are seen in glittering ranks with wings dis-  
     played,  
 Harping in loud and solemn quire, 115  
 With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born  
 heir.

## XII

Such music (as 'tis said)  
 Before was never made,  
     But when of old the sons of morning sung,  
 While the Creator great 120  
 His constellations set,  
     And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,  
 And cast the dark foundations deep,  
 And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel  
 keep.

## XIII

Ring out, ye crystal spheres! 125  
 Once bless our human ears  
     (If ye have power to touch our senses so),  
 And let your silver chime  
 Move in melodious time;

And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow;  
And with your ninefold harmony 131  
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

XIV

For if such holy song  
Enwrap our fancy long,  
Time will run back and fetch the age of gold; 135  
And speckled Vanity  
Will sicken soon and die,  
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould;  
And Hell itself will pass away,  
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering  
day. 140

XV

Yea, Truth and Justice then  
Will down return to men,  
Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,  
Mercy will sit between,  
Throned in celestial sheen, 145  
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;  
And heaven, as at some festival,  
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

XVI

But wisest Fate says no,  
This must not yet be so; 150  
The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy

That on the bitter cross  
 Must redeem our loss,  
     So both himself and us to glorify:  
 Yet first, to those ychained in sleep, 155  
 The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through  
     the deep,

## XVII

With such a horrid clang  
 As on Mount Sinai rang,  
     While the red fire and smouldering clouds out-  
     brake:  
 The aged earth, aghast 160  
 With terror of that blast,  
     Shall from the surface to the centre shake,  
 When at the world's last session,  
 The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his  
     throne.

## XVIII

And then at last our bliss 165  
 Full and perfect is,  
     But now begins; for from this happy day  
 The old Dragon under ground,  
 In straiter limits bound,  
     Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway; 170  
 And wroth to see his kingdom fail,  
 Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

XIX

The oracles are dumb;  
No voice or hideous hum  
Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiv-  
ing. 175

Apollo from his shrine  
Can no more divine,  
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.  
No nightly trance, or breathèd spell,  
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic  
cell. 180

XX

The lonely mountains o'er,  
And the resounding shore,  
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;  
From haunted spring, and dale  
Edged with poplar pale, 185  
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;  
With flower-inwoven tresses torn  
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets  
mourn.

XXI

In consecrated earth,  
And on the holy hearth, 190  
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight  
plaint;  
In urns and altars round,  
A drear and dying sound



Affrights the flamens at their service quaint;  
 And the chill marble seems to sweat, 195  
 While each peculiar power forgoes his wonted seat.

## XXII

Peor and Baälim  
 Forsake their temples dim,  
     With that twice-battered god of Palestine;  
 And moonèd Ashtaroth, 200  
 Heaven's queen and mother both,  
     Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;  
 The Libyc Hammon shrinks his horn;  
 In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz  
     mourn.

## XXIII

And sullen Moloch, fled, 205  
 Hath left in shadows dread  
     His burning idol all of blackest hue;  
 In vain with cymbals' ring  
 They call the grisly king,  
     In dismal dance about the furnace blue; 210  
 The brutish gods of Nile as fast,  
 Isis and Orus and the dog Anubis, haste.

## XXIV

Nor is Osiris seen  
 In Memphian grove or green,  
     Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings  
     loud; 215

Nor can he be at rest  
Within his sacred chest;  
Naught but profoundest Hell can be his shroud;  
In vain, with timbreled anthems dark;  
The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshiped ark.

XXV

He feels from Juda's land 221  
The dreaded Infant's hand;  
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn;  
Nor all the gods beside  
Longer dare abide, 225  
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:  
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,  
Can in his swaddling bands control the damnèd  
crew.

XXVI

So when the sun in bed,  
Curtained with cloudy red, 230  
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,  
The flocking shadows pale  
Troop to the infernal jail,  
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave,  
And the yellow-skirted fays 235  
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-  
loved maze.

XXVII

But see! the Virgin blest  
Hath laid her Babe to rest.

Time is our tedious song should here have ending:  
 Heaven's youngest-teemèd star 240  
 Hath fixed her polished car,  
 Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;  
 And all about the courtly stable  
 Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.

## UPON THE CIRCUMCISION.

YE flaming powers, and wingèd warriors bright,  
 That erst with music and triumphant song,  
 First heard by happy watchful shepherds' ear,  
 So sweetly sung your joy the clouds along,  
 Through the soft silence of the listening night, 5  
 Now mourn; and if, sad share with us to bear,  
 Your fiery essence can distil no tear,  
 Burn in your sighs, and borrow  
 Seas wept from our deep sorrow:  
 He who with all heaven's heraldry whilere 10  
 Entered the world, now bleeds to give us ease.  
 Alas! how soon our sin  
 Sore doth begin  
 His infancy to seize!

O more exceeding love, or law more just? 15  
 Just law, indeed, but more exceeding love!  
 For we, by rightful doom remediless,  
 Were lost in death, till he that dwelt above  
 High-throned in secret bliss, for us frail dust

Emptied his glory, even to nakedness; 20  
 And that great covenant which we still transgress  
 Entirely satisfied,  
 And the full wrath beside  
 Of vengeful justice bore for our excess,  
 And seals obedience first with wounding smart 25  
 This day; but oh! ere long,  
     Huge pangs and strong  
     Will pierce more near his heart!

## THE PASSION.

## I

EREWILE of music and ethereal mirth,  
 Wherewith the stage of air and earth did ring,  
 And joyous news of heavenly Infant's birth,  
 My muse with angels did divide to sing;  
 But headlong joy is ever on the wing, 5  
     In wintry solstice like the shortened light  
 Soon swallowed up in dark and long outliving  
     night.

## II

For now to sorrow must I tune my song,  
 And set my harp to notes of saddest woe,  
 Which on our dearest Lord did seize ere long, 10  
 Dangers and snares and wrongs, and worse than so,  
 Which he for us did freely undergo:  
     Most perfect hero, tried in heaviest plight  
 Of labours huge and hard, too hard for human  
     wight!

## III

He, sovran priest, stooping his regal head, 15  
 That dropt with odorous oil down his fair eyes,  
 Poor fleshly tabernacle enterèd,  
 His starry front low-roofed beneath the skies:  
 Oh, what a mask was there, what a disguise!  
 Yet more: the stroke of death he must abide; 20  
 Then lies him meekly down fast by his brethren's  
 side.

## IV

These latest scenes confine my roving verse;  
 To this horizon is my Phœbus bound.  
 His godlike acts, and his temptations fierce,  
 And former sufferings, elsewhere are found; 25  
 Loud o'er the rest Cremona's trump doth sound:  
 Me softer airs befit, and softer strings  
 Of lute, or viol still, more apt for mournful things.

## V

Befriend me, Night, best patroness of grief!  
 Over the pole thy thickest mantle throw, 30  
 And work my flattered fancy to belief  
 That heaven and earth are coloured with my woe;  
 My sorrows are too dark for day to know:  
 The leaves should all be black whereon I write,  
 And letters, where my tears have washed, a wan-  
 nish white. 35

## VI

See, see the chariot, and those rushing wheels,  
 That whirled the prophet up at Chebar flood;  
 My spirit some transporting cherub feels  
 To bear me where the towers of Salem stood,  
 Once glorious towers, now sunk in guiltless blood.

There doth my soul in holy vision sit, 41  
 In pensive trance and anguish and ecstatic fit.

## VII

Mine eye hath found that sad sepulchral rock  
 That was the casket of heaven's richest store,  
 And here, though grief my feeble hands up-lock, 45  
 Yet on the softened quarry would I score  
 My plaining verse as lively as before;

For sure so well instructed are my tears  
 That they would fitly fall in ordered characters.

## VIII

Or should I thence hurried on viewless wing, 50  
 Take up a weeping on the mountains wild,  
 The gentle neighbourhood of grove and spring  
 Would soon unbosom all their echoes mild;  
 And I (for grief is easily beguiled)

Might think the infection of my sorrows loud ' 55  
 Had got a race of mourners on some pregnant  
 cloud.

*This subject the Author finding to be above the years he had when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinished.*

## SONG ON MAY MORNING.

Now the bright morning-star, day's harbinger,  
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her  
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws  
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.

Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire 5

Mirth and youth and warm desire!

Woods and groves are of thy dressing,

Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.

Thus we salute thee with our early song,

And welcome thee, and wish thee long. 10

## ON SHAKESPEAR. 1630.

WHAT needs my Shakespear for his honoured bones  
The labour of an age in pilèd stones?

Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid<sup>d</sup>

Under a star-ypointing pyramid?

Dear son of memory, great heir of fame, 5

What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?

Thou in our wonder and astonishment

Hast built thyself a livelong monument.

For whilst to the shame of slow-endeavouring art,

Thy easy numbers flow; and that each heart 10

Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book

Those Delphic lines with deep impression took;

Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,

Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;

And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie, 15

That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

## ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER,

*Who sickened in the time of his vacancy, being forbid to go to London  
by reason of the Plague.*

HERE lies old Hobson: Death hath broke his girt,  
 And here, alas! hath laid him in the dirt;  
 Or else, the ways being foul, twenty to one  
 He's here stuck in a slough and overthrown.  
 'Twas such a shifter, that if truth were known, 5  
 Death was half glad when he had got him down;  
 For he had any time this ten years full  
 Dodged with him betwixt Cambridge and The Bull.  
 And surely Death could never have prevailed,  
 Had not his weekly course of carriage failed; 10  
 But lately, finding him so long at home,  
 And thinking now his journey's end was come,  
 And that he had ta'en up his latest inn,  
 In the kind office of a chamberlin  
 Showed him his room where he must lodge that  
                   night, 15  
 Pulled off his boots, and took away the light.  
 If any ask for him, it shall be said,  
 'Hobson has supped, and's newly gone to bed.'

## ANOTHER ON THE SAME.

HERE lieth one who did most truly prove  
 That he could never die while he could move;  
 So hung his destiny, never to rot  
 While he might still jog on and keep his trot;



Made of sphere-metal, never to decay 5  
 Until his revolution was at stay.

Time numbers motion, yet (without a crime  
 'Gainst old truth) motion numbered out his time;  
 And like an engine moved with wheel and weight,  
 His principles being ceased, he ended straight. 10  
 Rest, that gives all men life, gave him his death,  
 And too much breathing put him out of breath;  
 Nor were it contradiction to affirm  
 Too long vacation hastened on his term.

Merely to drive the time away he sickened, 15  
 Fainted, and died, nor would with ale be quickened.  
 'Nay,' quoth he, on his swooning bed outstretched,  
 'If I may not carry, sure I'll ne'er be fetched;  
 But vow, though the cross doctors all stood hearers,  
 For one carrier put down to make six bearers.' 20  
 Ease was his chief disease; and, to judge right,  
 He died for heaviness that his cart went light.  
 His leisure told him that his time was come,  
 And lack of load made his life burdensome,  
 That even to his last breath (there be that say't), 25  
 As he were pressed to death, he cried, 'More  
 weight!'

But had his doings lasted as they were,  
 He had been an immortal carrier.  
 Obedient to the moon he spent his date  
 In course reciprocal, and had his fate 30  
 Linked to the mutual flowing of the seas;  
 Yet (strange to think) his wain was his increase.  
 His letters are delivered all and gone;  
 Only remains this superscription.

## AN EPITAPH ON THE MARCHIONESS OF WINCHESTER.

THIS rich marble doth inter  
 The honoured wife of Winchester;  
 A viscount's daughter, an earl's heir,  
 Besides what her virtues fair  
 Added to her noble birth, 5  
 More than she could own from earth.  
 Summers three times eight save one  
 She had told; alas! too soon,  
 After so short time of breath,  
 To house with darkness and with death! 10  
 Yet had the number of her days  
 Been as complete as was her praise,  
 Nature and Fate had had no strife  
 In giving limit to her life.  
 Her high birth and her graces sweet 15  
 Quickly found a lover meet;  
 The virgin quire for her request  
 The god that sits at marriage-feast;  
 He at their invoking came,  
 But with a scarce-well-lighted flame; 20  
 And in his garland, as he stood,  
 Ye might discern a cypress-bud.  
 Once had the early matrons run  
 To greet her of a lovely son,  
 And now with second hope she goes, 25  
 And calls Lucina to her throes;  
 But whether by mischance or blame,  
 Atropos for Lucina came,

And with remorseless cruelty  
 Spoiled at once both fruit and tree. 30  
 The hapless babe before his birth  
 Had burial, yet not laid in earth;  
 And the languished mother's womb  
 Was not long a living tomb.  
 So have I seen some tender slip, 35  
 Saved with care from winter's nip,  
 The pride of her carnation train,  
 Plucked up by some unheedy swain,  
 Who only thought to crop the flower  
 New shot up from vernal shower; 40  
 But the fair blossom hangs the head  
 Sideways, as on a dying bed,  
 And those pearls of dew she wears  
 Prove to be presaging tears  
 Which the sad morn had let fall 45  
 On her hastening funeral.  
 Gentle Lady, may thy grave  
 Peace and quiet ever have!  
 After this thy travail sore,  
 Sweet rest seize thee evermore, 50  
 That, to give the world increase,  
 Shortened hast thy own life's lease!  
 Here, besides the sorrowing  
 That thy noble house doth bring,  
 Here be tears of perfect moan 55  
 Wept for thee in Helicon;  
 And some flowers and some bays  
 For thy hearse, to strew the ways,  
 Sent thee from the banks of Came,

*L'ALLEGRO.*

33

Devoted to thy virtuous name; 60  
Whilst thou, bright saint, high sit'st in glory,  
Next her, much like to thee in story,  
That fair Syrian shepherdess,  
Who, after years of barrenness,  
The highly-favoured Joseph bore 65  
To him that served for her before;  
And at her next birth, much like thee,  
Through pangs fled to felicity,  
Far within the bosom bright  
Of blazing majesty and light: 70  
There with thee, new-welcome saint,  
Like fortunes may her soul acquaint,  
With thee there clad in radiant sheen,  
No Marchioness, but now a Queen.

*L'ALLEGRO.*

HENCE, loathèd Melancholy,  
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born  
In Stygian cave forlorn,  
'Mongst horrid shapes and shrieks and sights un-  
holy!  
Find out some uncouth cell, 5  
Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous  
wings,  
And the night-raven sings;  
There under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,  
As ragged as thy locks,  
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell. 10  
But come, thou Goddess fair and free,

In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,  
 And by men heart-easing Mirth;  
 Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,  
 With two sister Graces more, 15  
 To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore;  
 Or whether (as some sager sing)  
 The frolic wind that breathes the spring,  
 Zephyr, with Aurora playing,  
 As he met her once a-Maying, 20  
 There on beds of violets blue  
 And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,  
 Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,  
 So buxom, blithe, and debonair.  
 Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee 25  
 Jést, and youthful Jollity,  
 Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,  
 Nods and becks and wreathèd smiles,  
 Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,  
 And love to live in dimple sleek; 30  
 Sport that wrinkled Care derides,  
 And Laughter holding both his sides.  
 Come, and trip it as you go,  
 On the light fantastic toe;  
 And in thy right hand lead with thee 35  
 The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;  
 And if I give thee honour due,  
 Mirth, admit me of thy crew,  
 To live with her, and live with thee,  
 In unprovèd pleasures free: 40  
 To hear the lark begin his flight,  
 And singing, startle the dull night,

From his watch-tower in the skies,  
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise;  
 Then to come in spite of sorrow, 45  
 And at my window bid good-morrow,  
 Through the sweet-briar or the vine,  
 Or the twisted eglantine;  
 While the cock, with lively din,  
 Scatters the rear of darkness thin; 50  
 And to the stack, or the barn-door,  
 Stoutly struts his dames before:  
 Oft listening how the hounds and horn  
 Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,  
 From the side of some hoar hill, 55  
 Through the high wood echoing shrill:  
 Sometime walking, not unseen,  
 By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,  
 Right against the eastern gate  
 Where the great sun begins his state, 60  
 Robed in flames and amber light,  
 The clouds in thousand liveries dight;  
 While the ploughman, near at hand,  
 Whistles o'er the furrowed land,  
 And the milkmaid singeth blithe, 65  
 And the mower whets his scythe,  
 And every shepherd tells his tale  
 Under the hawthorn in the dale.  
 Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,  
 Whilst the landskip round it measures: 70  
 Russet lawns and fallows grey,  
 Where the nibbling flocks do stray;  
 Mountains on whose barren breast

The labouring clouds do often rest;  
 Meadows trim with daisies pied, 75  
 Shallow brooks and rivers wide;  
 Towers and battlements it sees  
 Bosomed high in tufted trees,  
 Where perhaps some beauty lies,  
 The cynosure of neighbouring eyes. 80  
 Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes  
 From betwixt two aged oaks,  
 Where Corydon and Thyrsis met  
 Are at their savoury dinner set  
 Of herbs and other country messes, 85  
 Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;  
 And then in haste her bower she leaves,  
 With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;  
 Or, if the earlier season lead,  
 To the tanned haycock in the mead. 90  
 Sometimes, with secure delight,  
 The upland hamlets will invite,  
 When the merry bells ring round,  
 And the jocund rebecks sound  
 To many a youth and many a maid 95  
 Dancing in the chequered shade;  
 And young and old come forth to play  
 On a sunshine holiday,  
 Till the livelong daylight fail:  
 Then to the spicy nut-brown ale, 100  
 With stories told of many a feat,  
 How faery Mab the junkets eat.  
 She was pinched and pulled, she said;  
 And he, by friar's lantern led,

Tells how the drudging goblin sweat 105  
 To earn his cream-bowl duly set,  
 When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
 His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn  
 That ten day-labourers could not end;  
 Then lies him down, the lubber fiend, 110  
 And, stretched out all the chimney's length,  
 Basks at the fire his hairy strength,  
 And crop-full out of doors he flings,  
 Ere the first cock his matin rings.  
 Thus done the tales, to bed they creep, 115  
 By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.  
 Towered cities please us then,  
 And the busy hum of men,  
 Where throngs of knights and barons bold,  
 In weeds of peace high triumphs hold, 120  
 With store of ladies, whose bright eyes  
 Rain influence, and judge the prize  
 Of wit or arms, while both contend  
 To win her grace whom all commend.  
 There let Hymen oft appear 125  
 In saffron robe, with taper clear,  
 And pomp and feast and revelry,  
 With mask and antique pageantry;  
 Such sights as youthful poets dream  
 On summer eves by haunted stream. 130  
 Then to the well-trod stage anon,  
 If Jonson's learnèd sock be on,  
 Or sweetest Shakespear, Fancy's child,  
 Warble his native wood-notes wild.  
 And ever, against eating cares, 135



Lap me in soft Lydian airs,  
 Married to immortal verse,  
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce,  
 In notes with many a winding bout  
 Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out, 140  
 With wanton heed and giddy cunning,  
 The melting voice through mazes running,  
 Untwisting all the chains that tie  
 The hidden soul of harmony;  
 That Orpheus' self may heave his head 145  
 From golden slumber on a bed  
 Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear  
 Such strains as would have won the ear  
 Of Pluto to have quite set free  
 His half-regained Eurydice. 150  
 These delights if thou canst give,  
 Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

## IL PENSEROSO.

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,  
 The brood of Folly without father bred!  
 How little you bested,  
 Or fill the fixèd mind with all your toys!  
 Dwell in some idle brain, 5  
 And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,  
 As thick and numberless  
 As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,  
 Or likest hovering dreams,  
 The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train. 10

But hail, thou Goddess sage and holy,  
 Hail, divinest Melancholy!  
 Whose saintly visage is too bright  
 To hit the sense of human sight,  
 And therefore to our weaker view                    15  
 O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;  
 Black, but such as in esteem  
 Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,  
 Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove  
 To set her beauty's praise above                    20  
 The sea nymphs, and their powers offended.  
 Yet thou art higher far descended:  
 Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore  
 To solitary Saturn bore;  
 His daughter she (in Saturn's reign                    25  
 Such mixture was not held a stain).  
 Oft in glimmering bowers and glades  
 He met her, and in secret shades  
 Of woody Ida's inmost grove,  
 Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.                    30  
 Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,  
 Sober, steadfast, and demure,  
 All in a robe of darkest grain,  
 Flowing with majestic train,  
 And sable stole of cypress lawn                    35  
 Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
 Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
 With even step, and musing gait,  
 And looks commercing with the skies,  
 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:                    40  
 There, held in holy passion still,

Forget thyself to marble, till  
 With a sad leaden downward cast  
 Thou fix them on the earth as fast.  
 And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet, 45  
 Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,  
 And hears the Muses in a ring  
 Aye round about Jove's altar sing;  
 And add to these retired Leisure,  
 That in trim gardens takes his pleasure; 50  
 But first, and chiefest, with thee bring  
 Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
 Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,  
 The cherub Contemplation;  
 And the mute Silence hist along, 55  
 'Less Philomel will deign a song,  
 In her sweetest, saddest plight,  
 Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,  
 While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke  
 Gently o'er the accustomed oak: 60  
 Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
 Most musical, most melancholy!  
 Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among,  
 I woo to hear thy even-song;  
 And missing thee, I walk unseen 65  
 On the dry smooth-shaven green,  
 To behold the wandering moon,  
 Riding near her highest noon,  
 Like one that had been led astray  
 Through the heaven's wide pathless way, 70  
 And oft, as if her head she bowed,  
 Stooping through a fleecy cloud.

Oft on a plat of rising ground,  
 I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
 Over some wide-watered shore, 75  
 Swinging slow with sullen roar;  
 Or if the air will not permit,  
 Some still removèd place will fit,  
 Where glowing embers through the room  
 Teach light to counterfeit a gloom, 80  
 Far from all resort of mirth,  
 Save the cricket on the hearth,  
 Or the bellman's drowsy charm  
 To bless the doors from nightly harm.  
 Or let my lamp at midnight hour 85  
 Be seen in some high lonely tower,  
 Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,  
 With thrice-great Hermes; or unsphere  
 The spirit of Plato, to unfold  
 What worlds or what vast regions hold 90  
 The immortal mind that hath forsook  
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook;  
 And of those demons that are found  
 In fire, air, flood, or underground,  
 Whose power hath a true consent 95  
 With planet or with element.  
 Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy  
 In sceptred pall come sweeping by,  
 Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,  
 Or the tale of Troy divine, 100  
 Or what (though rare) of later age  
 Ennobled hath the buskined stage.  
 But, O sad Virgin! that thy power

Might raise Musæus from his bower;  
 Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing 105  
 Such notes as, warbled to the string,  
 Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,  
 And made Hell grant what love did seek;  
 Or call up him that left half-told  
 The story of Cambuscan bold, 110  
 Of Camball, and of Algarsife,  
 And who had Canace to wife,  
 That owned the virtuous ring and glass,  
 And of the wondrous horse of brass  
 On which the Tartar king did ride; 115  
 And if aught else great bards beside  
 In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
 Of turneys, and of trophies hung,  
 Of forests, and enchantments drear,  
 Where more is meant than meets the ear. 120  
 Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,  
 Till civil-suited Morn appear,  
 Not tricked and frounced as she was wont  
 With the Attic boy to hunt,  
 But kerchieft in a comely cloud, 125  
 While rocking winds are piping loud,  
 Or ushered with a shower still,  
 When the gust hath blown his fill,  
 Ending on the rustling leaves,  
 With minute-drops from off the eaves. 130  
 And when the sun begins to fling  
 His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring  
 To archèd walks of twilight groves,  
 And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,

Of pine, or monumental oak, 135  
 Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke  
 Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,  
 Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.  
 There in close covert by some brook,  
 Where no profaner eye may look, 140  
 Hide me from day's garish eye,  
 While the bee with honeyed thigh,  
 That at her flowery work doth sing,  
 And the waters murmuring,  
 With such consort as they keep, 145  
 Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep;  
 And let some strange mysterious dream  
 Wave at his wings in airy stream  
 Of lively portraiture displayed,  
 Softly on my eyelids laid; 150  
 And as I wake, sweet music breathe  
 Above; about, or underneath,  
 Sent by some spirit to mortals good,  
 Or the unseen Genius of the wood.  
 But let my due feet never fail 155  
 To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
 And love the high embowèd roof,  
 With antique pillars massy proof,  
 And storied windows richly dight,  
 Casting a dim religious light. 160  
 There let the pealing organ blow,  
 To the full-voiced quire below,  
 In service high and anthems clear,  
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
 Dissolve me into ecstasies, 165

And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.  
 And may at last my weary age  
 Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
 The hairy gown, and mossy cell,  
 Where I may sit and rightly spell 170  
 Of every star that heaven doth shew,  
 And every herb that sips the dew,  
 Till old experience do attain  
 To something like prophetic strain.  
 These pleasures, Melancholy, give, 175  
 And I with thee will choose to live.

## AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.

BLEST pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,  
 Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,  
 Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ,  
 Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce;  
 And to our high-raised phantasy present 5  
 That undisturbèd song of pure concent,  
 Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne  
 To Him that sits thereon,  
 With saintly shout and solemn jubilee;  
 Where the bright seraphim in burning row 10  
 Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,  
 And the cherubic host in thousand quires  
 Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,  
 With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,  
 Hymns devout and holy psalms 15  
 Singing everlastingly:  
 That we on earth, with undiscording voice,

May rightly answer that melodious noise;  
 As once we did, till disproportioned sin  
 Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din  
 Broke the fair music that all creatures made 21  
 To their great Lord, whose love their motion  
 swayed

In perfect diapason, whilst they stood  
 In first obedience and their state of good.  
 O, may we soon again renew that song, 25  
 And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long  
 To his celestial consort us unite,  
 To live with Him, and sing in endless morn of light!

## ON TIME.

FLY, envious Time, till thou run out thy race;  
 Call on the lazy leaden-stepping hours,  
 Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace;  
 And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,  
 Which is no more than what is false and vain, 5  
 And merely mortal dross;  
 So little is our loss,  
 So little is thy gain!  
 For whenas each thing bad thou hast entombed,  
 And last of all thy greedy self consumed, 10  
 Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss  
 With an individual kiss,  
 And Joy shall overtake us as a flood;  
 When every thing that is sincerely good  
 And perfectly divine, 15  
 With Truth and Peace and Love, shall ever shine



About the supreme throne  
 Of Him, to whose happy-making sight alone  
 When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb,  
 Then, all this earthy grossness quit, 20  
 Attired with stars we shall for ever sit,  
 Triumphing over Death and Chance and thee,  
 O Time!

## ARCADES.

*Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield, by some noble persons of her family: who appear on the scene in pastoral habit, moving toward the seat of state, with this song:—*

## I. SONG.

LOOK, nymphs and shepherds, look!  
 What sudden blaze of majesty  
 Is that which we from hence descry,  
 Too divine to be mistook?  
 This, this is she 5  
 To whom our vows and wishes bend:  
 Here our solemn search hath end.

Fame, that her high worth to raise  
 Seemed erst so lavish and profuse,  
 We may justly now accuse 10  
 Of detraction from her praise:  
 Less than half we find expressed;  
 Envy bid conceal the rest.

Mark what radiant state she spreads  
 In circle round her shining throne, 15  
 Shooting her beams like silver threads;  
 This, this is she alone,  
     Sitting like a goddess bright  
     In the centre of her light.

Might she the wise Latona be, 20  
 Or the towered Cybele,  
 Mother of a hundred gods?  
 Juno dares not give her odds:  
     Who had thought this clime had held  
     A deity so unparalleled? 25

*As they come forward, the GENIUS of the Wood appears, and turning toward them, speaks.*

*Genius.* Stay, gentle swains, for though in this  
 disguise,  
 I see bright honour sparkle through your eyes;  
 Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung  
 Of that renownèd flood, so often sung,  
 Divine Alpheus, who by secret sluice, 30  
 Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse;  
 And ye, the breathing roses of the wood,  
 Fair silver-buskined nymphs, as great and good;  
 I know this quest of yours and free intent  
 Was all in honour and devotion meant 35  
 To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,  
 Whom with low reverence I adore as mine,  
 And with all helpful service will comply

To further this night's glad solemnity,  
And lead ye where ye may more near behold 40  
What shallow-searching Fame hath left untold;  
Which I full oft, amidst these shades alone,  
Have sat to wonder at and gaze upon.  
For know, by lot from Jove I am the power  
Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower, 45  
To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove  
With ringlets quaint and wanton windings wove;  
And all my plants I save from nightly ill  
Of noisome winds and blasting vapours chill;  
And from the boughs brush off the evil dew, 50  
And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,  
Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites,  
Or hurtful worm with cankered venom bites.  
When evening grey doth rise, I fetch my round  
Over the mount and all this hallowed ground; 55  
And early, ere the odorous breath of morn  
Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tasselled horn  
Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,  
Number my ranks, and visit every sprout  
With puissant words and murmurs made to bless.  
But else, in deep of night, when drowsiness 61  
Hath locked up mortal sense, then listen I  
To the celestial Sirens' harmony,  
That sit upon the nine enfolded spheres,  
And sing to those that hold the vital shears, 65  
And turn the adamantine spindle round,  
On which the fate of gods and men is wound.  
Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie,  
To lull the daughters of Necessity,

And keep unsteady Nature to her law, 70  
 And the low world in measured motion draw  
 After the heavenly tune, which none can hear  
 Of human mould with gross unpurgèd ear;  
 And yet such music worthiest were to blaze  
 The peerless height of her immortal praise 75  
 Whose lustre leads us, and for her most fit,  
 If my inferior hand or voice could hit  
 Inimitable sounds: yet, as we go,  
 Whate'er the skill of lesser gods can show,  
 I will assay, her worth to celebrate, 80  
 And so attend ye toward her glittering state;  
 Where ye may all that are of noble stem  
 Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem.

## II. SONG.

O'er the smooth enamelled green,  
 Where no print of step hath been, 85  
     Follow me, as I sing  
     And touch the warbled string;  
 Under the shady roof  
 Of branching elm star-proof,  
     Follow me: 90  
 I will bring you where she sits,  
 Clad in splendour as befits  
     Her deity.  
 Such a rural Queen  
 All Arcadia hath not seen. 95

## III. SONG.

Nymphs and shepherds, dance no more  
By sandy Ladon's liliated banks;  
On old Lycæus or Cyllene hoar,  
Trip no more in twilight ranks;  
Though Erymanth your loss deplore, 100  
A better soil shall give ye thanks.  
From the stony Mænalus  
Bring your flocks, and live with us;  
Here ye shall have greater grace,  
To serve the Lady of this place. 105  
Though Syrinx your Pan's mistress were,  
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.  
Such a rural Queen  
All Arcadia hath not seen.

## COMUS.

A MASK PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634, BEFORE THE  
EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, THEN PRESIDENT OF WALES.

To the Right Honourable, John Lord Viscount Brackley,  
son and heir-apparent to the Earl of Bridgewater, &c.

MY LORD,

This Poem, which received its first occasion of birth from yourself and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person in the performance, now returns again to make a final Dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the Author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view, and now to offer it up, in all rightful devotion, to those fair hopes and rare endowments of your much-promising youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live, sweet Lord, to be the honour of your name; and receive this as your own, from the hands of him who hath by many favours been long obliged to your most honoured Parents, and, as in this representation your attendant *Thyrsis*, so now in all real expression

Your faithful and most humble Servant,

H. LAWES.

The Copy of a Letter written by Sir Henry Wotton to the  
Author, upon the following poem.

From the College, this 13 of April, 1638.

SIR,

It was a special favour when you lately bestowed upon me here the first taste of your acquaintance, though

no longer than to make me know that I wanted more time to value it and to enjoy it rightly; and, in truth, if I could then have imagined your farther stay in these parts, which I understood afterwards by Mr. H., I would have been bold, in our vulgar phrase, to mend my draught (for you left me 'with an extreme thirst), and to have begged your conversation again, jointly with your said learned friend, at a poor meal or two, that we might have banded together some good authors of the ancient time: among which I observed you to have been familiar.

Since your going, you have charged me with new obligations, both for a very kind letter from you dated the sixth of this month, and for a dainty piece of entertainment which came therewith. Wherein I should much commend the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Doric delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language: *Ipsa mollities*. But I must not omit to tell you that I now only owe you thanks for intimating unto me (how modestly soever) the true artificer. For the work itself I had viewed some good while before with singular delight; having received it from our common friend Mr. R., in the very close of the late R.'s Poems, printed at Oxford; whereunto it was added (as I now suppose) that the accessory might help out the principal, according to the art of stationers, and to leave the reader *con la bocca dolce*.

Now, Sir, concerning your travels; wherein I may challenge a little more privilege of discourse with you: I suppose you will not blanch Paris in your way; therefore I have been bold to trouble you with a few lines to Mr. M. B., whom you shall easily find attending the young Lord S. as his governor; and you may surely receive from him good directions for the shaping of your farther journey into Italy, where he did reside, by my choice, some time for the King, after mine own recess from Venice,

I should think that your best line will be through the whole length of France to Marseilles, and thence by sea to Genoa; whence the passage into Tuscany is as diurnal as a Gravesend barge. I hasten, as you do, to Florence or Siena, the rather to tell you a short story, from the interest you have given me in your safety.

At Siena I was tabled in the house of one Alberto Scipioni, an old Roman courtier in dangerous times; having been steward to the Duca di Pagliano, who with all his family were strangled, save this only man, that escaped by foresight of the tempest. With him I had often much chat of those affairs, into which he took pleasure to look back from his native harbour; and, at my departure toward Rome (which had been the centre of his experience), I had won his confidence enough to beg his advice how I might carry myself securely there, without offence of others or of mine own conscience. "*Signor Arrigo mio*, (says he) *I pensieri stretti ed il viso sciolto* will go safely over the whole world." Of which Delphian oracle (for so I have found it) your judgment doth need no commentary; and therefore (Sir) I will commit you with it to the best of all securities, God's dear love, remaining

Your friend as much at command  
as any of longer date,

HENRY WOTTON.

*Postscript.*

Sir, I have expressly sent this my footboy to prevent your departure without some acknowledgment from me of the receipt of your obliging letter; having myself through some business, I know not how, neglected the ordinary conveyance. In any part where I shall understand you fixed, I shall be glad and diligent to entertain you with home novelties; even for some fomentation of our friendship, too soon interrupted in the cradle.



## THE PERSONS.

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterwards in the habit of THYRSIS.  
COMUS, with his Crew.

THE LADY.

FIRST BROTHER.

SECOND BROTHER.

SABRINA, the Nymph.

The Chief Persons which presented were :

The Lord Brackley,  
Mr. Thomas Egerton, his Brother,  
The Lady Alice Egerton.

## COMUS.

*The first Scene discovers a wild wood.*

*The ATTENDANT SPIRIT descends or enters.*

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court  
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes  
Of bright aerial spirits live insphered  
In regions mild of calm and serene air,  
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot           5  
Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted  
care,

Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,  
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,  
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,  
After this mortal change, to her true servants       10  
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.  
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire

To lay their just hands on that golden key  
 That opes the palace of eternity.  
 To such my errand is; and but for such, 15  
 I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds  
 With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.  
 But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway  
 Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,  
 Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove, 20  
 Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles  
 That, like to rich and various gems, inlay  
 The unadornèd bosom of the deep;  
 Which he, to grace his tributary gods,  
 By course commits to several government, 25  
 And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns  
 And wield their little tridents. But this Isle,  
 The greatest and the best of all the main,  
 He quarters to his blue-haired deities;  
 And all this tract that fronts the falling sun, 30  
 A noble peer of mickle trust and power  
 Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide  
 An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:  
 Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,  
 Are coming to attend their father's state, 35  
 And new-intrusted sceptre. But their way  
 Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear  
 wood,  
 The nodding horror of whose shady brows  
 Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;  
 And here their tender age might suffer peril, 40  
 But that by quick command from sovran Jove,  
 I was despatched for their defence and guard:

And listen why; for I will tell you now  
 What never yet was heard in tale or song,  
 From old or modern bard, in hall or bower. 45

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape  
 Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,  
 After the Tuscan mariners transformed,  
 Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,  
 On Circe's island fell (who knows not Circe, 50  
 The daughter of the Sun? whose charmed cup  
 Whoever tasted lost his upright shape  
 And downward fell into a grovelling swine):  
 This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks  
 With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth, 55  
 Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son  
 Much like his father, but his mother more,  
 Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus  
 named:

Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,  
 Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields, 60  
 At last betakes him to this ominous wood,  
 And in thick shelter of black shades imbowered,  
 Excels his mother at her mighty art,  
 Offering to every weary traveller  
 His orient liquor in a crystal glass, 65  
 To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they  
 taste

(For most do taste through fond intemperate  
 thirst),

Soon as the potion works, their human count'nance,  
 The express resemblance of the gods, is changed  
 Into some brutish form of wolf or bear, 70

Or ounce or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,  
 All other parts remaining as they were.  
 And they, so perfect is their misery,  
 Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,  
 But boast themselves more comely than before, 75  
 And all their friends and native home forget,  
 To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.  
 Therefore, when any favoured of high Jove  
 Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,  
 Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star 80  
 I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,  
 As now I do. But first I must put off  
 These my sky-ropes, spun out of Iris' woof,  
 And take the weeds and likeness of a swain  
 That to the service of this house belongs, 85  
 Who with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,  
 Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,  
 And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,  
 And in this office of his mountain watch  
 Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid 90  
 Of this occasion. But I hear the tread  
 Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

*COMUS enters, with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistening; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold,  
 Now the top of heaven doth hold;  
 And the gilded car of day 95  
 His glowing axle doth allay  
 In the steep Atlantic stream;

And the slope sun his upward beam  
 Shoots against the dusky pole,  
 Pacing toward the other goal 100  
 Of his chamber in the east.  
 Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,  
 Midnight shout and revelry,  
 Topsy dance and jollity.  
 Braid your locks with rosy twine, 105  
 Dropping odours, dropping wine.  
 Rigour now is gone to bed,  
 And Advice with scrupulous head,  
 Strict Age, and sour Severity,  
 With their grave saws, in slumber lie. 110  
 We that are of purer fire  
 Imitate the starry quire,  
 Who in their nightly watchful spheres,  
 Lead in swift round the months and years.  
 The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove, 115  
 Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;  
 And on the tawny sands and shelves  
 Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.  
 By dimpled brook and fountain brim,  
 The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim, 120  
 Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:  
 What hath night to do with sleep?  
 Night hath better sweets to prove;  
 Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.  
 Come, let us our rites begin; 125  
 'Tis only daylight that makes sin,  
 Which these dun shades will ne'er report.  
 Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,

Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame  
 Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame, 130  
 That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb  
 Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,  
 And makes one blot of all the air;  
 Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,  
 Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend 135  
 Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end  
 Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;  
 Ere the blabbing eastern scout,  
 The nice Morn on the Indian steep,  
 From her cabined loop-hole peep, 140  
 And to the tell-tale Sun descry  
 Our concealed solemnity.  
 Come, knit hands, and beat the ground  
 In a light fantastic round.

*The Measure.*

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace 145  
 Of some chaste footing near about this ground.  
 Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees;  
 Our number may affright: some virgin sure  
 (For so I can distinguish by mine art)  
 Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms, 150  
 And to my wily trains: I shall ere long  
 Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed  
 About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl  
 My dazzling spells into the spongy air,  
 Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion, 155  
 And give it false presentments, lest the place  
 And my quaint habits breed astonishment,

And put the damsel to suspicious flight;  
 Which must not be, for that's against my course.  
 I, under fair pretence of friendly ends, 160  
 And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,  
 Baited with reasons not unplausible,  
 Wind me into the easy-hearted man,  
 And hug him into snares. When once her eye  
 Hath met the virtue of this magic dust, 165  
 I shall appear some harmless villager,  
 Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.  
 But here she comes; I fairly step aside,  
 And hearken, if I may, her business here. 169

*The LADY enters.*

*Lady.* This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,  
 My best guide now. Methought it was the sound  
 Of riot and ill-managed merriment,  
 Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe  
 Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds, 174  
 When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,  
 In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,  
 And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath  
 To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence  
 Of such late wassailers; yet oh! where else  
 Shall I inform my unacquainted feet 180  
 In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?  
 My brothers, when they saw me wearied out  
 With this long way, resolving here to lodge  
 Under the spreading favour of these pines,  
 Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side 185  
 To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit

As the kind hospitable woods provide.  
 They left me then when the grey-hooded Even,  
 Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed, 189  
 Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.  
 But where they are, and why they came not back,  
 Is now the labour of my thoughts: 'tis likeliest  
 They had engaged their wandering steps too far;  
 And envious darkness, ere they could return,  
 Had stole them from me; else, O thievish Night,  
 Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end, 196  
 In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars  
 That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps  
 With everlasting oil, to give due light  
 To the misled and lonely traveller? 200  
 This is the place, as well as I may guess,  
 Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth  
 Was rife and perfect in my listening ear;  
 Yet naught but single darkness do I find.  
 What might this be? A thousand fantasjes 205  
 Begin to throng into my memory,  
 Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,  
 And airy tongues that syllable men's names  
 On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.  
 These thoughts may startle well, but not astound  
 The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended 211  
 By a strong siding champion, Conscience.  
 O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,  
 Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,  
 And thou unblemished form of Chastity! 215  
 I see ye visibly, and now believe  
 That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill



Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,  
 Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,  
 To keep my life and honour unassailed.— 220  
 Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud  
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night?  
 I did not err: there does a sable cloud  
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night,  
 And casts a gleam over this tufted grove. 225  
 I cannot hallo to my brothers, but  
 Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest  
 I'll venture; for my new-enlivened spirits  
 Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

## SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen  
     Within thy airy shell 231  
     By slow Meander's margent green,  
 And in the violet-embroidered vale  
     Where the love-lorn nightingale  
 Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well: 235  
 Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair  
     That liketh thy Narcissus are?  
     O, if thou have  
     Hid them in some flowery cave,  
     Tell me but where, 240  
     Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere!  
     So may'st thou be translated to the skies,  
 And give resounding grace to all heaven's har-  
     monies!

*Comus.* Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould  
 Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment? 245  
 Sure something holy lodges in that breast,  
 And with these raptures moves the vocal air  
 To testify his hidden residence.

How sweetly did they float upon the wings  
 Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night, 250  
 At every fall smoothing the raven down  
 Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard  
 My mother Circe with the Sirens three,  
 Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,  
 Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs, 255  
 Who as they sung would take the prisoned soul  
 And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,  
 And chid her barking waves into attention,  
 And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.  
 Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense, 260  
 And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;  
 But such a sacred and home-felt delight,  
 Such sober certainty of waking bliss,  
 I never heard till now. I'll speak to her, 264  
 And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder!  
 Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,  
 Unless the goddess that in rural shrine  
 Dwell'st here with Pan or Sylvan, by blest song  
 Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog 269  
 To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

*Lady.* Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise  
 That is addressed to unattending ears.  
 Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift  
 How to regain my severed company,

Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo 275  
 To give me answer from her mossy couch.

*Comus.* What chance, good Lady, hath bereft  
 you thus?

*Lady.* Dim darkness and this leavy labyrinth.

*Comus.* Could that divide you from near-usher-  
 ing guides?

*Lady.* They left me weary on a grassy turf. 280

*Comus.* By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

*Lady.* To seek i' the valley some cool friendly  
 spring.

*Comus.* And left your fair side all unguarded,  
 Lady?

*Lady.* They were but twain, and purposed quick  
 return.

*Comus.* Perhaps forestalling night prevented  
 them. 285

*Lady.* How easy my misfortune is to hit!

*Comus.* Imports their loss, beside the present  
 need?

*Lady.* No less than if I should my brothers lose.

*Comus.* Were they of manly prime, or youthful  
 bloom?

*Lady.* As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.

*Comus.* Two such I saw, what time the la-  
 boured ox 291

In his loose traces from the furrow came,  
 And the swinked hedger at his supper sat.  
 I saw them under a green mantling vine,  
 That crawls along the side of yon small hill, 295  
 Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;

Their port was more than human, as they stood.  
 I took it for a faery vision  
 Of some gay creatures of the element,  
 That in the colours of the rainbow live, 300  
 And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-strook,  
 And as I passed, I worshiped. If those you seek,  
 It were a journey like the path of Heaven  
 To help you find them.

*Lady.* Gentle villager, 304

What readiest way would bring me to that place?

*Comus.* Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

*Lady.* To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,  
 In such a scant allowance of star-light,  
 Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,  
 Without the sure guess of well-practised feet. 310

*Comus.* I know each lane, and every alley green,  
 Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,  
 And every bosky bourn from side to side,  
 My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;  
 And if your stray attendance be yet lodged, 315  
 Or shroud within these limits, I shall know  
 Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark  
 From her thatched pallet rouse. If otherwise,  
 I can conduct you, Lady, to a low  
 But loyal cottage, where you may be safe 320  
 Till further quest.

*Lady.* Shepherd, I take thy word,  
 And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,  
 Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,  
 With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls  
 And courts of princes, where it first was named, 325

And yet is most pretended. In a place  
 Less warranted than this, or less secure,  
 I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.  
 Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial 329  
 To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on.  
 [*Exeunt.*]

*The TWO BROTHERS enter.*

*Elder Brother.* Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou,  
 fair moon,  
 That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,  
 Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,  
 And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here  
 In double night of darkness and of shades; 335  
 Or if your influence be quite dammed up  
 With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,  
 Though a rush candle from the wicker hole  
 Of some clay habitation, visit us  
 With thy long levelled rule of streaming light, 340  
 And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,  
 Or Tyrian Cynosure.

*Second Brother.* Or if our eyes  
 Be barred that happiness, might we but hear  
 The folded flocks, penned in their wattled cotes,  
 Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops, 345  
 Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock  
 Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,  
 'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,  
 In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.  
 But oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister! 350  
 Where may she wander now, whither betake her

From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?  
 Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,  
 Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm  
 Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.  
 What if in wild amazement and affright, 356  
 Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp  
 Of savage hunger or of savage heat?

*Eld. Bro.* Peace, brother: be not over-exquisite  
 To cast the fashion of uncertain evils; 360  
 For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,  
 What need a man forestall his date of grief,  
 And run to meet what he would most avoid?  
 Or if they be but false alarms of fear,  
 How bitter is such self-delusion! 365  
 I do not think my sister so to seek,  
 Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,  
 And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,  
 As that the single want of light and noise  
 (Not being in danger, as I trust she is not) 370  
 Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,  
 And put them into misbecoming plight.  
 Virtue could see to do what Virtue would  
 By her own radiant light, though sun and moon  
 Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self 375  
 Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,  
 Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,  
 She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,  
 That in the various bustle of resort,  
 Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired. 380  
 He that has light within his own clear breast  
 May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day:

But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,  
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;  
Himself is his own dungeon.

*Second Brother.* 'Tis most true 385  
That musing Meditation most affects  
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,  
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,  
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;  
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds, 390  
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,  
Or do his gray hairs any violence?  
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree  
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard  
Of dragon watch with unenchanted eye, 395  
To save her blossoms and defend her fruit  
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.  
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps  
Of misers' treasure by an outlaw's den,  
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope 400  
Danger will wink on Opportunity,  
And let a single helpless maiden pass  
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.  
Of night or loneliness it recks me not;  
I fear the dread events that dog them both, 405  
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person  
Of our unownèd sister.

*Elder Brother.* I do not, brother,  
Infer as if I thought my sister's state  
Secure without all doubt or controversy;  
Yet where an equal poise of hope and fear 410  
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is

That I incline to hope rather than fear,  
 And gladly banish squint suspicion.  
 My sister is not so defenceless left  
 As you imagine; she has a hidden strength, 415  
 Which you remember not.

*Second Brother.* What hidden strength,  
 Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

*Elder Brother.* I mean that too, but yet a hidden  
 strength,

Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own.  
 'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity: 420

She that has that, is clad in complete steel,  
 And like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,  
 May trace huge forests, and unharboured heaths,  
 Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;  
 Where, through the sacred rays of chastity, 425  
 No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer,  
 Will dare to soil her virgin purity.

Yea, there where very desolation dwells,  
 By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,  
 She may pass on with unblenched majesty, 430  
 Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.

Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,  
 In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,  
 Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,  
 That breaks his magic chains at curfew time, 435  
 No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,  
 Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.

Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call  
 Antiquity from the old schools of Greece  
 To testify the arms of chastity? 440



Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,  
 Fair silver-shafted queen forever chaste,  
 Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness  
 And spotted mountain-pard, but set at naught  
 The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men 445  
 Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the  
 woods.

What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield  
 That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,  
 Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,  
 But rigid looks of chaste austerity, 450  
 And noble grace that dashed brute violence  
 With sudden adoration and blank awe?  
 So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,  
 That when a soul is found sincerely so,  
 A thousand liveried angels lackey her, 455  
 Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,  
 And in clear dream and solemn vision  
 Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;  
 Till oft converse with heavenly habitants  
 Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape, 460  
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
 And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,  
 Till all be made immortal. But when lust,  
 By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,  
 But most by lewd and lavish act of sin, 465  
 Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
 The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
 Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose  
 The divine property of her first being.  
 Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp

Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres, 471  
 Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,  
 As loath to leave the body that it loved,  
 And linked itself by carnal sensuality  
 To a degenerate and degraded state. 475

*Sec. Bro.* How charming is divine philosophy!  
 Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,  
 But musical as is Apollo's lute,  
 And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,  
 Where no crude surfeit reigns.

*Elder Brother.* List, list! I hear  
 Some far-off hallo break the silent air. 481

*Sec. Bro.* Methought so too; what should it be?

*Elder Brother.* For certain,  
 Either some one, like us, night-foundered here,  
 Or else some neighbour woodman, or at worst,  
 Some roving robber calling to his fellows. 485

*Second Brother.* Heaven keep my sister! Again,  
 again, and near!  
 Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

*Elder Brother.* I'll hallo.  
 If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,  
 Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us!

*Enter the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, habited like a shepherd.*

That hallo I should know. What are you? speak.  
 Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else. 491

*Spirit.* What voice is that? my young lord? speak  
 again.

*Second Brother.* O Brother, 'tis my father's shep-  
 herd, sure.

*Elder Brother.* Thyrsis? whose artful strains  
 have oft delayed  
 The huddling brook to hear his madrigal, 495  
 And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale:  
 How cam'st thou here, good swain? Hath any ram  
 Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,  
 Or straggl'ing wether the pent flock forsook?  
 How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook?  
*Spirit.* O my loved master's heir, and his next  
 joy, 501

I came not here on such a trivial toy  
 As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth  
 Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth  
 That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought  
 To this my errand, and the care it brought. 506  
 But oh! my virgin lady, where is she?  
 How chance she is not in your company?

*Elder Brother.* To tell thee sadly, shepherd, with-  
 out blame  
 Or our neglect, we lost her as we came. 510  
*Spirit.* Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.  
*Elder Brother.* What fears, good Thyrsis?  
 Prithee briefly shew.

*Spirit.* I'll tell ye. 'Tis not vain or fabulous  
 (Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)  
 What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,  
 Storied of old in high immortal verse 516  
 Of dire Chimeras and enchanted isles,  
 And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell;  
 For such there be, but unbelief is blind.  
 Within the navel of this hideous wood, 520

Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,  
 Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,  
 Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries;  
 And here to every thirsty wanderer,  
 By sly enticement gives his baneful cup, 525  
 With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison  
 The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,  
 And the inglorious likeness of a beast  
 Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage  
 Charactered in the face. This have I learnt 530  
 Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts  
 That brow this bottom glade; whence night by  
 night

He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl  
 Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,  
 Doing abhorrèd rites to Hecate 535  
 In their obscurèd haunts of inmost bowers.  
 Yet have they many baits and guileful spells  
 To inveigle and invite the unwary sense  
 Of them that pass unweeting by the way.  
 This evening late, by then the chewing flocks 540  
 Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb  
 Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,  
 I sat me down to watch upon a bank  
 With ivy canopied, and interwove  
 With flaunting honeysuckle, and began, 545  
 Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,  
 To meditate my rural minstrelsy,  
 Till fancy had her fill: but ere a close  
 The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,  
 And filled the air with barbarous dissonance; 550

At which I ceased, and listened them awhile,  
 Till an unusual stop of sudden silence  
 Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds  
 That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.  
 At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound 555  
 Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,  
 And stole upon the air, that even Silence  
 Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might  
 Deny her nature, and be never more,  
 Still to be so displaced. I was all ear, 560  
 And took in strains that might create a soul  
 Under the ribs of Death; but oh! ere long  
 Too well I did perceive it was the voice  
 Of my most honoured lady, your dear sister.  
 Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear; 565  
 And 'O poor hapless nightingale,' thought I,  
 'How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly  
 snare!'

Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,  
 Through paths and turnings often trod by day,  
 Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place, 570  
 Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise  
 (For so by certain signs I knew), had met  
 Already, ere my best speed could prevent,  
 The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey;  
 Who gently asked if he had seen such two, 575  
 Supposing him some neighbour villager.  
 Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed  
 Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung  
 Into swift flight, till I had found you here;  
 But further know I not.

*Second Brother.* O night and shades, 580  
 How are ye joined with hell in triple knot  
 Against the unarmèd weakness of one virgin,  
 Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence  
 You gave me, brother?

*Elder Brother.* Yes, and keep it still;  
 Lean on it safely; not a period 585  
 Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats  
 Of malice or of sorcery, or that power  
 Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm:  
 Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt;  
 Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled; 590  
 Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm  
 Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.  
 But evil on itself shall back recoil,  
 And mix no more with goodness, when at last,  
 Gathered like scum, and settled to itself, 595  
 It shall be in eternal restless change  
 Self-fed and self-consumed. If this fail,  
 The pillared firmament is rottenness,  
 And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on!  
 Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven 600  
 May never this just sword be lifted up;  
 But for that damned magician, let him be girt  
 With all the griesly legions that troop  
 Under the sooty flag of Acheron,  
 Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms  
 'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out, 606  
 And force him to return his purchase back,  
 Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,  
 Cursed as his life.

*Spirit.* Alas! good venturous youth,  
 I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise; 610  
 But here thy sword can do thee little stead:  
 Far other arms and other weapons must  
 Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.  
 He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints  
 And crumble all thy sinews.

*Elder Brother.* Why prithee, shepherd, 615  
 How durst thou then thyself approach so near  
 As to make this relation?

*Spirit.* Care and utmost shifts  
 How to secure the lady from surprisal  
 Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,  
 Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled 620  
 In every virtuous plant and healing herb  
 That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.  
 He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing;  
 Which when I did, he on the tender grass  
 Would sit and hearken even to ecstasy, 625  
 And in requital ope his leathern scrip,  
 And show me simples of a thousand names,  
 Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.  
 Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,  
 But of divine effect, he culled me out; 630  
 The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,  
 But in another country, as he said,  
 Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:  
 Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain  
 Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon; 635  
 And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly  
 That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.

He called it Hæmony, and gave it me,  
 And bade me keep it as of sovran use  
 'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,  
 Or ghastly Furies' apparition. 641

I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,  
 Till now that this extremity compelled.  
 But now I find it true; for by this means  
 I knew the foul enchanter though disguised, 645  
 Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,  
 And yet came off. If you have this about you  
 (As I will give you when we go), you may  
 Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;  
 Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood 650  
 And brandished blade rush on him, break his glass,  
 And shed the luscious liquor on the ground;  
 But seize his wand. Though he and his curst crew  
 Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,  
 Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke, 655  
 Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

*Eld. Bro.* Thyrsis, lead on apace; I'll follow thee;  
 And some good angel bear a shield before us!

*The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft music, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS appears with his rabble, and the LADY set in an enchanted chair; to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

*Comus.* Nay, Lady, sit. If I but wave this wand,  
 Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster, 660  
 And you a statue, or as Daphne was,  
 Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

*Lady.* Fool, do not boast;  
 Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind



With all thy charms, although this corporal rind  
Thou hast immanacled while Heaven sees good.

*Comus.* Why are you vexed, Lady? why do you  
frown? 666

Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates  
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures  
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,  
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns 670  
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.

And first behold this cordial julep here,  
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,  
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.  
Not that Nephthes, which the wife of Thone 675  
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,

Is of such power to stir up joy as this,  
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.  
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,  
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent 680  
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?

But you invert the covenants of her trust,  
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,  
With that which you received on other terms,  
Scorning the unexempt condition 685

By which all mortal frailty must subsist,  
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,  
That have been tired all day without repast,  
And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,  
This will restore all soon.

*Lady.* 'Twill not, false traitor! 690  
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty  
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.

Was this the cottage and the safe abode  
 Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,  
 These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!  
 Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul de-  
                     ceiver! 696

Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence  
 With vizored falsehood and base forgery?  
 And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here  
 With lickerish baits, fit to ensnare a brute? 700  
 Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,  
 I would not taste thy treasonous offer. None  
 But such as are good men can give good things;  
 And that which is not good is not delicious  
 To a well-governed and wise appetite. 705

*Comus.* O foolishness of men! that lend their ears  
 To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,  
 And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,  
 Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence!  
 Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth 710  
 With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,  
 Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,  
 Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,  
 But all to please and sate the curious taste?  
 And set to work millions of spinning worms, 715  
 That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired  
                     silk,  
 To deck her sons; and, that no corner might  
 Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins  
 She hatched the all-worshipped ore and precious  
                     gems,  
 To store her children with. If all the world 720

Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,  
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,  
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be un-  
praised,

Not half his riches known, and yet despised;  
And we should serve him as a grudging master, 725  
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,  
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,  
Who would be quite surcharged with her own  
weight,

And strangled with her waste fertility:  
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked  
with plumes; 730

The herds would over-multitude their lords;  
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought  
diamonds

Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,  
And so bestud with stars, that they below  
Would grow inured to light, and come at last 735  
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.

List, Lady; be not coy, and be not cozened  
With that same vaunted name, Virginitie.  
Beauty is Nature's coin; must not be hoarded,  
But must be current; and the good thereof 740  
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,  
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself.

If you let slip time, like a neglected rose  
It withers on the stalk with languished head.  
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown 745  
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,  
Where most may wonder at the workmanship.

It is for homely features to keep home;  
 They had their name thence: coarse complexions  
 And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply 750  
 The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.  
 What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,  
 Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?  
 There was another meaning in these gifts;  
 Think what, and be advised; you are but young  
 yet. 755

*Lady.* I had not thought to have unlocked my  
 lips

· In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler  
 Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,  
 Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.  
 I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments 760  
 And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.  
 Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,  
 As if she would her children should be riotous  
 With her abundance. She, good cateress,  
 Means her provision only to the good, 765  
 That live according to her sober laws,  
 And holy dictate of spare Temperance.  
 If every just man that now pines with want  
 Had but a moderate and beseeming share  
 Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury 770  
 Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,  
 Nature's full blessings would be well-dispensed  
 In unsuperfluous even proportion,  
 And she no whit encumbered with her store;  
 And then the Giver would be better thanked, 775  
 His praise due paid; for swinish gluttony

Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,  
 But with besotted base ingratitude  
 Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on?  
 Or have I said enough? To him that dares 780  
 Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words  
 Against the sun-clad power of chastity  
 Fain would I something say; yet to what end?  
 Thou hast nor ear nor soul to apprehend  
 The sublime notion and high mystery 785  
 That must be uttered to unfold the sage  
 And serious doctrine of Virginity;  
 And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know  
 More happiness than this thy present lot.  
 Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric 790  
 That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;  
 Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.  
 Yet should I try, the uncontrollèd worth  
 Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits  
 To such a flame of sacred vehemence 795  
 That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,  
 And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and  
 shake,

Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,  
 Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

*Comus.* She fables not; I feel that I do fear 800  
 Her words set off by some superior power;  
 And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew  
 Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove  
 Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus  
 To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble, 805  
 And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more!

This is mere moral babble, and direct  
 Against the canon laws of our foundation.  
 I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees  
 And settlings of a melancholy blood. 810  
 But this will cure all straight; one sip of this  
 Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight  
 Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

*The BROTHERS rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground; his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The ATTENDANT SPIRIT comes in.*

*Spirit.* What, have you let the false enchanter  
 scape?

Oh, ye mistook; ye should have snatched his wand,  
 And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed, 816  
 And backward mutters of dis severing power,  
 We cannot free the lady that sits here  
 In stony fetters fixed and motionless.  
 Yet stay, be not disturbed; now I bethink me, 820  
 Some other means I have which may be used,  
 Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,  
 The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.

There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,  
 That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn  
 stream: 825

Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure;  
 Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,  
 That had the sceptre from his father Brute.  
 She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit  
 Of her enraged stepdame, Guendolen, 830  
 Commended her fair innocence to the flood

That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.  
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,  
Held up their pearlèd wrists, and took her in,  
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall; 835  
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,  
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe  
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel,  
And through the porch and inlet of each sense  
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived, 840  
And underwent a quick immortal change,  
Made goddess of the river. Still she retains  
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve  
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,  
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs 845  
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,  
Which she with precious vialèd liquors heals:  
For which the shepherds at their festivals  
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,  
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream,  
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils. 851  
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock  
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,  
If she be right invoked in warbled song;  
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift 855  
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,  
In hard-besetting need. This will I try,  
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

## SONG.

Sabrina fair,  
 Listen where thou art sitting 860  
 Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,  
 In twisted braids of lilies knitting  
 The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;  
 Listen for dear honour's sake,  
 Goddess of the silver lake, 865  
 Listen and save!

Listen, and appear to us,  
 In name of great Oceanus,  
 By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,  
 And Tethys' grave majestic pace; 870  
 By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,  
 And the Carpathian wizard's hook;  
 By scaly Triton's winding shell,  
 And old sooth-saying Glaucus' spell;  
 By Leucothea's lovely hands, 875  
 And her son that rules the strands;  
 By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,  
 And the songs of Sirens sweet;  
 By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,  
 And fair Ligea's golden comb, 880  
 Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks  
 Sleeking her soft alluring locks;  
 By all the nymphs that nightly dance  
 Upon thy streams with wily glance;  
 Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head 885  
 From thy coral-paven bed,



And bridle in thy headlong wave,  
 Till thou our summons answered have.  
 Listen and save!

*SABRINA rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings.*

By the rushy-fringed bank, 890  
 Where grows the willow and the osier dank,  
 My sliding chariot stays,  
 Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen  
 Of turkis blue, and emerald green,  
 That in the channel strays; 895  
 Whilst from off the waters fleet  
 Thus I set my printless feet  
 O'er the cowslip's velvet head,  
 That bends not as I tread.  
 Gentle swain, at thy request 900  
 I am here.

*Spirit.* Goddess dear,  
 We implore thy powerful hand  
 To undo the charmèd band  
 Of true virgin here distressed 905  
 Through the force and through the wile  
 Of unblest enchanter vile.

*Sabrina.* Shepherd, 'tis my office best  
 To help ensnarèd chastity.  
 Brightest Lady, look on me. 910  
 Thus I sprinkle on thy breast  
 Drops that from my fountain pure  
 I have kept of precious cure;  
 Thrice upon thy finger's tip,  
 Thrice upon thy rubied lip; 915

Next, this marble venomèd seat,  
 Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,  
 I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.  
 Now the spell hath lost his hold;  
 And I must haste ere morning hour 920  
 To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

*SABRINA descends, and the LADY rises out of her seat.*

*Spirit.* Virgin, daughter of Locrine,  
 Sprung of old Anchises' line,  
 May thy brimmèd waves for this  
 Their full tribute never miss 925  
 From a thousand petty rills,  
 That tumble down the snowy hills;  
 Summer drouth or singèd air  
 Never scorch thy tresses fair,  
 Nor wet October's torrent flood 930  
 Thy molten crystal fill with mud;  
 May thy billows roll ashore  
 The beryl and the golden ore;  
 May thy lofty head be crowned  
 With many a tower and terrace round, 935  
 And here and there thy banks upon  
 With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come, Lady; while Heaven lends us grace,  
 Let us fly this cursèd place,  
 Lest the sorcerer us entice 940  
 With some other new device.  
 Not a waste or needless sound  
 Till we come to holier ground.  
 I shall be your faithful guide

Through this gloomy covert wide; 945  
 And not many furlongs thence  
 Is your father's residence,  
 Where this night are met in state  
 Many a friend to gratulate  
 His wished presence, and beside, 950  
 All the swains that there abide,  
 With jigs and rural dance resort.  
 We shall catch them at their sport,  
 And our sudden coming there  
 Will double all their mirth and cheer. 955  
 Come, let us haste; the stars grow high,  
 But Night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

*The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town and the President's Castle; then come in Country Dancers; after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, with the two BROTHERS, and the LADY.*

## SONG.

*Spirit.* Back, shepherds, back! Enough your  
 play  
 Till next sun-shine holiday.  
 Here be, without duck or nod, 960  
 Other trippings to be trod  
 Of lighter toes, and such court guise  
 As Mercury did first devise  
 With the mincing Dryades  
 On the lawns and on the leas. 965

*This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.*

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,  
 I have brought ye new delight:  
 Here behold so goodly grown  
 Three fair branches of your own.  
 Heaven hath timely tried their youth, 970  
 Their faith, their patience, and their truth,  
 And sent them here through hard assays  
 With a crown of deathless praise,  
 To triumph in victorious dance  
 O'er sensual folly and intemperance. 975

*The dances ended, the SPIRIT epiloguizes.*

*Spirit.* To the ocean now I fly,  
 And those happy climes that lie  
 Where day never shuts his eye,  
 Up in the broad fields of the sky.  
 There I suck the liquid air, 980  
 All amidst the gardens fair  
 Of Hesperus, and his daughters three  
 That sing about the golden tree.  
 Along the crispèd shades and bowers  
 Revels the spruce and jocund Spring; 985  
 The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours  
 Thither all their bounties bring.  
 There eternal summer dwells,  
 And west winds with musky wing  
 About the cedarn alleys fling 990  
 Nard and cassia's balmy smells.  
 Iris there with humid bow

Waters the odorous banks, that blow  
 Flowers of more mingled hue  
 Than her purpled scarf can shew, 995  
 And drenches with Elysian dew  
 (List, mortals, if your ears be true)  
 Beds of hyacinth and roses,  
 Where young Adonis oft reposes,  
 Waxing well of his deep wound, 1000  
 In slumber soft, and on the ground  
 Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.  
 But far above, in spangled sheen,  
 Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,  
 Holds his dear Psyche, sweet entranced, 1005  
 After her wandering labours long,  
 Till free consent the gods among  
 Make her his eternal bride,  
 And from her fair unspotted side  
 Two blissful twins are to be born, 1010  
 Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.  
 But now my task is smoothly done;  
 I can fly, or I can run  
 Quickly to the green earth's end,  
 Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend, 1015  
 And from thence can soar as soon  
 To the corners of the moon.  
 Mortals that would follow me,  
 Love Virtue; she alone is free:  
 She can teach ye how to climb 1020  
 Higher than the sphery chime;  
 Or if Virtue feeble were,  
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.

## LYCIDAS.

*In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637; and by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.*

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
And with forced fingers rude  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.     5  
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear  
Compels me to disturb your season due;  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.  
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew     10  
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.  
He must not float upon his watery bier  
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
Without the meed of some melodious tear.  
Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well     15  
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;  
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.  
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse;  
So may some gentle Muse  
With lucky words favour my destined urn,     20  
And as he passes turn,  
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,  
 Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;  
 Together both, ere the high lawns appeared 25  
 Under the opening eyelids of the morn,  
 We drove a-field, and both together heard  
 What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,  
 Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
 Oft till the star that rose at evening, bright, 30  
 Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering  
 wheel.

Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
 Tempered to the oaten flute;  
 Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel  
 From the glad sound would not be absent long; 35  
 And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.

But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,  
 Now thou art gone, and never must return!  
 Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,  
 With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,  
 And all their echoes, mourn. 41

The willows and the hazel copses green  
 Shall now no more be seen,  
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.  
 As killing as the canker to the rose, 45  
 Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,  
 Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,  
 When first the white-thorn blows;  
 Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless  
 deep 50  
 Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?

For neither were ye playing on the steep  
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,  
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,  
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream. 55  
Ay me, I fondly dream!

Had ye been there—for what could that have done?  
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,  
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,  
Whom universal nature did lament, 60  
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,  
His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with uncessant care  
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade, 65  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?  
Were it not better done, as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?  
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise 70  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)

To scorn delights and live laborious days;  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorrèd shears, 75  
And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'  
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears:  
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistening foil  
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies; 80  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;



As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.' 84

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood,  
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,  
That strain I heard was of a higher mood:

But now my oat proceeds,  
And listens to the herald of the sea,  
That came in Neptune's plea. 90

He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,  
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?  
And questioned every gust of rugged wings  
That blows from off each beakèd promontory:  
They knew not of his story; 95

And sage Hippotades their answer brings,  
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed;  
The air was calm, and on the level brine  
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.

It was that fatal and perfidious bark, 100  
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,  
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,  
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,  
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge 105  
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.  
'Ah! who hath reft,' quoth he, 'my dearest  
pledge?'

Last came, and last did go,  
The pilot of the Galilean lake;  
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110  
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).  
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:

'How well could I have spared for thee, young  
swain,

Enough of such as for their bellies' sake,  
Creep and intrude and climb into the fold! 115

Of other care they little reckoning make  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.  
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to  
hold

A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least  
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs! 121  
What recks it them? What need they? They are  
sped;

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;  
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed, 125  
But swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;  
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.  
But that two-handed engine at the door 130  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.'

Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past  
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,  
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast  
Their bells and flowrets of a thousand hues. 135  
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use  
Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks,  
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,  
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,  
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,

And purple all the ground with vernal flowers. 141  
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
 The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
 The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,  
 The glowing violet, 145  
 The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,  
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears;  
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
 And daffodillies fill their cups with tears, 150  
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.  
 For so to interpose a little ease,  
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise,  
 Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
 Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled; 155  
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
 Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
 Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;  
 Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,  
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old, 160  
 Where the great vision of the guarded mount  
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.  
 Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth;  
 And O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.  
 Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,  
 For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead, 166  
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor;  
 So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
 And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore  
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky: 171

So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
Through the dear might of him that walked the  
waves,

Where, other groves and other streams along,  
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves, 175  
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,  
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.

There entertain him all the saints above,  
In solemn troops and sweet societies,  
That sing, and singing in their glory move, 180  
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;  
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,  
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
To all that wander in that perilous flood. 185

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and  
rills,

While the still morn went out with sandals gray;  
He touched the tender stops of various quills,  
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:  
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills, 190  
And now was dropt into the western bay.  
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:  
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

## SONNETS.

### TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

O NIGHTINGALE, that on yon bloomy spray  
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still,  
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,  
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May.  
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,           5  
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,  
Portend success in love. O, if Jove's will  
Have linked that amorous power to thy soft  
lay,  
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate           9  
Foretell my hopeless doom, in some grove nigh;  
As thou from year to year hast sung too late  
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why.  
Whether the Muse or Love call thee his mate,  
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

### ON HIS HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,  
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth  
year!  
My hasting days fly on with full career,  
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.  
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth   5

That I to manhood am arrived so near;  
 And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
 That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.  
 Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,  
 It shall be still in strictest measure even 10  
 To that same lot, however mean or high,  
 Toward which Time leads me, and the will of  
 Heaven;  
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
 As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

## WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY.

CAPTAIN, or Colonel, or Knight in arms,  
 Whose chance on these defenceless doors may  
 seize,  
 If ever deed of honour did thee please,  
 Guard them, and him within protect from  
 harms.  
 He can requite thee; for he knows the charms 5  
 That call fame on such gentle acts as these,  
 And he can spread thy name o'er lands and  
 seas,  
 Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.  
 Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower:  
 The great Emathian conqueror bid spare 10  
 The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower  
 Went to the ground; and the repeated air  
 Of sad Electra's poet had the power  
 To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

## TO A VIRTUOUS YOUNG LADY.

LADY, that in the prime of earliest youth  
 Wisely hast shunned the broad way and the  
 green,  
 And with those few art eminently seen  
 That labour up the hill of heavenly truth,  
 The better part with Mary and with Ruth      5  
 Chosen thou hast; and they that overween,  
 And at thy growing virtues fret their spleen,  
 No anger find in thee, but pity and ruth.  
 Thy care is fixed, and zealously attends  
 To fill thy odorous lamp with deeds of light, 10  
 And hope that reaps not shame. Therefore be  
 sure  
 Thou, when the bridegroom with his feastful  
 friends  
 Passes to bliss at the mid-hour of night,  
 Hast gained thy entrance, Virgin wise and  
 pure.

## TO THE LADY MARGARET LEY.

DAUGHTER to that good Earl, once President  
 Of England's Council and her Treasury,  
 Who lived in both, unstained with gold or fee,  
 And left them both, more in himself content,  
 Till the sad breaking of that Parliament      5  
 Broke him, as that dishonest victory  
 At Chæronea, fatal to liberty,

Killed with report that old man eloquent;  
 Though later born than to have known the days  
     Wherein your father flourished, yet by you, 10  
     Madam, methinks I see him living yet:  
 So well your words his noble virtues praise  
     That all both judge you to relate them true  
     And to possess them, honoured Margaret.

ON THE DETRACTION WHICH FOLLOWED UPON MY  
 WRITING CERTAIN TREATISES.

A BOOK was writ of late called Tetrachordon,  
     And woven close, both matter, form, and style;  
     The subject new: it walked the town a while,  
     Numbering good intellects; now seldom  
     poured on.  
 Cries the stall-reader, ' Bless us! what a word on 5  
     A title-page is this!'; and some in file  
     Stand spelling false, while one might walk to  
     Mile-  
     End Green. Why, is it harder, sirs, than  
     Gordon,  
 Colkitto, or Macdonnel, or Galasp?  
     Those rugged names to our like mouths grow  
     sleek 10  
     That would have made Quintilian stare and  
     gasp.  
 Thy age, like ours, O soul of Sir John Cheek,  
     Hated not learning worse than toad or asp,  
     When thou taught'st Cambridge and King  
     Edward Greek,



## ON THE SAME.

I DID but prompt the age to quit their clogs  
     By the known rules of ancient liberty,  
     When straight a barbarous noise environs me  
     Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs;  
 As when those hinds that were transformed to frogs  
     Railed at Latona's twin-born progeny,         6  
     Which after held the sun and moon in fee.  
     But this is got by casting pearl to hogs,  
 That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,  
     And still revolt when truth would set them free.  
     Licence they mean when they cry Liberty;     11  
 For who loves that must first be wise and good:  
     But from that mark how far they rove we see,  
     For all this waste of wealth and loss of blood.

ON THE NEW FORCERS OF CONSCIENCE UNDER  
THE LONG PARLIAMENT.

BECAUSE you have thrown off your Prelate Lord,  
     And with stiff vows renounced his Liturgy,  
     To seize the widowed whore Plurality  
     From them whose sin ye envied, not abhorred;  
 Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword         5  
     To force our consciences that Christ set free,  
     And ride us with a classic hierarchy,  
     Taught ye by mere A. S. and Rutherford?  
 Men whose life, learning, faith, and pure intent,  
     Would have been held in high esteem with  
     Paul,   10

Must now be named and printed heretics  
 By shallow Edwards and Scotch What-d'ye-call!  
 But we do hope to find out all your tricks,  
 Your plots and packing, worse than those of  
 Trent;

That so the Parliament 15  
 May with their wholesome and preventive shears  
 Clip your phylacteries, though baulk your ears,  
 And succour our just fears,  
 When they shall read this clearly in your charge:  
 New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large. 20

## TO MR. H. LAWES ON HIS AIRS.

HARRY, whose tuneful and well-measured song  
 First taught our English music how to span  
 Words with just note and accent, not to scan  
 With Midas' ears, committing short and long:  
 Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng,  
 With praise enough for Envy to look wan: 6  
 To after age thou shalt be writ the man  
 That with smooth air couldst humour best our  
 tongue.

Thou honour'st verse, and verse must lend her wing  
 To honour thee, the priest of Phœbus' quire, 10  
 That tun'st their happiest lines in hymn or  
 story.

Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher  
 Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,  
 Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.

ON THE RELIGIOUS MEMORY OF MRS. CATHARINE  
THOMSON, MY CHRISTIAN FRIEND, DECEASED DEC.  
16, 1646.

WHEN Faith and Love, which parted from thee  
never,  
Had ripened thy just soul to dwell with God,  
Meekly thou didst resign this earthly load  
Of death, called life, which us from life doth  
sever.

Thy works and alms and all thy good endeavour 5  
Stayed not behind, nor in the grave were trod;  
But as Faith pointed with her golden rod,  
Followed thee up to joy and bliss forever.  
Love led them on; and Faith, who knew them best  
Thy handmaids, clad them o'er with purple  
beams 10  
And azure wings, that up they flew so drest,  
And speak the truth of thee on glorious themes  
Before the Judge; who henceforth bid thee  
rest,  
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams.

ON THE LORD GENERAL FAIRFAX, AT THE SIEGE  
OF COLCHESTER.

FAIRFAX, whose name in arms through Europe  
rings,  
Filling each mouth with envy or with praise,  
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze,

And rumours loud that daunt remotest kings,  
 Thy firm unshaken virtue ever brings 5  
 Victory home, though new rebellions raise  
 Their hydra heads, and the false North dis-  
 plays  
 Her broken league to imp their serpent wings.  
 O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand  
 (For what can war but endless war still  
 breed?) 10  
 Till truth and right from violence be freed,  
 And public faith cleared from the shameful brand  
 Of public fraud. In vain doth Valour bleed,  
 While Avarice and Rapine share the land.

## TO THE LORD GENERAL CROMWELL,

MAY, 1652.

ON THE PROPOSALS OF CERTAIN MINISTERS AT THE  
 COMMITTEE FOR PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL.

CROMWELL, our chief of men, who through a cloud  
 Not of war only, but detractions rude,  
 Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,  
 To peace and truth thy glorious way hast  
 ploughed,  
 And on the neck of crownèd Fortune proud 5  
 Hast reared God's trophies, and his work pur-  
 sued,  
 While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots im-  
 brued,

And Dunbar field, resounds thy praises loud,  
 And Worcester's laureate wreath: yet much re-  
 mains

To conquer still; peace hath her victories 10  
 No less renowned than war: new foes arise,  
 Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains.  
 Help us to save free conscience from the paw  
 Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw.

TO SIR HENRY VANE THE YOUNGER.

VANE, young in years, but in sage counsel old,  
 Than whom a better senator ne'er held  
 The helm of Rome, when gowns, not arms,  
 repelled  
 The fierce Epirot and the African bold,  
 Whether to settle peace, or to unfold 5  
 The drift of hollow states hard to be spelled;  
 Then to advise how war may best upheld  
 Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold,  
 In all her equipage; besides, to know  
 Both spiritual power and civil, what each  
 means, 10  
 What severs each, thou hast learned, which  
 few have done.  
 The bounds of either sword to thee we owe:  
 Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans  
 In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son.

## ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEMONT.

AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose  
 bones  
 Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
 Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
 When all our fathers worshiped stocks and  
 stones,  
 Forget not: in thy book record their groans      5  
 Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
 Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that rolled  
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their  
 moans  
 The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
 To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes  
 sow      10  
 O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
 The triple tyrant; that from these may grow  
 A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,  
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

## ON HIS BLINDNESS.

WHEN I consider how my light is spent  
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
 And that one talent which is death to hide  
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more  
 bent  
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present      5  
 My true account, lest he returning chide;

'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'  
 I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent  
 That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need  
 Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best  
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His  
     state 11  
 Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,  
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
 They also serve who only stand and wait.'

## TO MR. LAWRENCE.

LAWRENCE, of virtuous father virtuous son,  
 Now that the fields are dank, and ways are  
     mire,  
 Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the  
     fire  
 Help waste a sullen day, what may be won  
 From the hard season gaining? Time will run 5  
 On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire  
 The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire  
 The lily and rose, that neither sowed nor spun.  
 What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice, 9  
 Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise  
 To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice  
 Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?  
 He who of those delights can judge, and spare  
 To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

## TO CYRIACK SKINNER.

CYRIACK, whose grandsire on the royal bench  
 Of British Themis, with no mean applause,  
 Pronounced, and in his volumes taught, our  
 laws,  
 Which others at their bar so often wrench;  
 To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench 5  
 In mirth that after no repenting draws;  
 Let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause,  
 And what the Swede intends, and what the  
 French.  
 To measure life learn thou betimes, and know 9  
 Toward solid good what leads the nearest way;  
 For other things mild Heaven a time ordains,  
 And disapproves that care, though wise in show,  
 That with superfluous burden loads the day,  
 And when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.

## TO THE SAME.

CYRIACK, this three years' day these eyes, though  
 clear  
 To outward view, of blemish or of spot,  
 Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot;  
 Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear  
 Of sun or moon or star throughout the year, 5  
 Or man or woman. Yet I argue not  
 Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot  
 Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer



Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?  
 The conscience, friend, to have lost them over-  
 plied 10  
 In liberty's defence, my noble task,  
 Of which all Europe talks from side to side.  
 This thought might lead me through the  
 world's vain mask  
 Content, though blind, had I no better guide.

## ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

METHOUGHT I saw my late espoused saint  
 Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,  
 Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband  
 gave,  
 Rescued from Death by force, though pale and  
 faint.  
 Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint  
 Purification in the old law did save, 6  
 And such as yet once more I trust to have  
 Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,  
 Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.  
 Her face was veiled; yet to my fancied sight 10  
 Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person  
 shined  
 So clear as in no face with more delight.  
 But oh! as to embrace me she inclined,  
 I waked, she fled, and day brought back my  
 night.

## THE FIFTH ODE OF HORACE, LIB. I. ENGLISHED.

*Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa.*

Rendered almost word for word, without rhyme, according to the Latin measure, as near as the language will permit.

WHAT slender youth, bedewed with liquid odours,  
 Courts thee on roses in some pleasant cave,  
     Pyrrha? For whom bind'st thou  
     In wreaths thy golden hair,  
 Plain in thy neatness? Oh, how oft shall he  
 On faith and changèd gods complain, and seas  
     Rough with black winds and storms,  
     Unwonted shall admire,  
 Who now enjoys thee credulous all gold;  
 Who always vacant, always amiable  
     Hopes thee, of flattering gales  
     Unmindful! Hapless they  
 To whom thou untried seem'st fair! Me, in my  
     vowed  
 Picture, the sacred wall declares to have hung  
     My dank and dropping weeds  
     To the stern god of sea.

# SAMSON AGONISTES.

A DRAMATIC POEM.

ARISTOT. *Poet.* cap. 6. *Τραγωδία μιμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας, &c.*—Tragœdia est imitatio actionis seriæ, &c., per misericordiam & metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem.

OF THAT SORT OF DRAMATIC POEM WHICH IS CALLED  
TRAGEDY.

TRAGEDY, as it was anciently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such-like passions; that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is Nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion; for so, in physic, things of melancholic hue and quality are used against melancholy, sour against 10 sour, salt to remove salt humours. Hence philosophers and other gravest writers, as Cicero, Plutarch, and others, frequently cite out of tragic poets, both to adorn and illustrate their discourse. The Apostle Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of Euripides 15 into the text of Holy Scripture, 1 *Cor.* xv. 33; and Paræus, commenting on the *Revelation*, divides the whole book as a tragedy, into acts, distinguished each by a Chorus of heavenly harpings and song between. Heretofore men in highest dignity have laboured not a little to be thought 20 able to compose a tragedy. Of that honour Dionysius

the elder was no less ambitious, than before of his attaining to the tyranny. Augustus Cæsar also had begun his *Ajax*, but, unable to please his own judgment with what he had begun, left it unfinished. Seneca, the philosopher, <sup>25</sup> is by some thought the author of those tragedies (at least the best of them) that go under that name. Gregory Nazianzen, a Father of the Church, thought it not unbecoming the sanctity of his person to write a tragedy, which he entitled *Christ Suffering*. This is mentioned to <sup>30</sup> vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day, with other common interludes: happening through the poet's error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity, or introducing trivial and vulgar persons; <sup>35</sup> which by all judicious hath been counted absurd, and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people. And though ancient tragedy use no prologue, yet using sometimes, in case of self-defence, or explanation, that which Martial calls an epistle; in behalf of this <sup>40</sup> tragedy, coming forth after the ancient manner, much different from what among us passes for best, thus much beforehand may be epistled: that Chorus is here introduced after the Greek manner, not ancient only, but modern, and still in use among the Italians. In the <sup>45</sup> modelling therefore of this poem, with good reason, the ancients and Italians are rather followed, as of much more authority and fame. The measure of verse used in the Chorus is of all sorts, called by the Greeks Monostrophic, or rather Apolelymenon, without regard had to <sup>50</sup> Strophe, Antistrophe, or Epode,—which were a kind of stanzas framed only for the music then used with the Chorus that sung; not essential to the poem, and therefore not material; or, being divided into stanzas or pauses, they may be called Allœostropha. Division into act and <sup>55</sup> scene, referring chiefly to the stage (to which this work never was intended), is here omitted.

It suffices if the whole drama be found not produced beyond the fifth act. Of the style and uniformity, and

that commonly called the plot, whether intricate or 60  
 explicit,—which is nothing indeed but such economy or  
 disposition of the fable, as may stand best with veri-  
 similitude and decorum,—they only will best judge who  
 are not unacquainted with Æschylus, Sophocles, and  
 Euripides, the three tragic poets unequalled yet by any, 65  
 and the best rule to all who endeavour to write tragedy.  
 The circumscription of time, wherein the whole drama  
 begins and ends, is, according to ancient rule and best ex-  
 ample, within the space of twenty-four hours.

#### THE ARGUMENT.

SAMSON, made captive, blind, and now in the prison at  
 Gaza, there to labour as in a common workhouse, on a  
 festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes  
 forth into the open air, to a place nigh, somewhat retired,  
 there to sit awhile and bemoan his condition. Where he 5  
 happens at length to be visited by certain friends and  
 equals of his tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to  
 comfort him what they can; then by his old father,  
 Manoa, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his  
 purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this 10  
 feast was proclaimed by the Philistines as a day of thanks-  
 giving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson,—  
 which yet more troubles him. Manoa then departs to  
 prosecute his endeavour with the Philistian lords for  
 Samson's redemption; who in the meanwhile is visited 15  
 by other persons; and lastly by a public officer to require  
 his coming to the feast before the lords and people, to  
 play or show his strength in their presence; he at first  
 refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial  
 to come; at length, persuaded inwardly that this was from 20  
 God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the  
 second time with great threatenings to fetch him: the  
 Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoa returns full of  
 joyful hope, to procure ere long his son's deliverance; in  
 the midst of which discourse an Ebrew comes in haste, 25

confusedly at first, and afterwards more distinctly, relating the catastrophe,—what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself; wherewith the tragedy ends.

## THE PERSONS.

SAMSON.

MANOA, the Father of Samson.

DALILA, his Wife.

HARAPHA of Gath.

Public Officer.

Messenger.

Chorus of Danites.

The Scene, before the Prison in Gaza.

## SAMSON AGONISTES.

*Samson.* A little onward lend thy guiding hand  
 To these dark steps, a little further on;  
 For yonder bank hath choice of sun or shade:  
 There I am wont to sit, when any chance  
 Relieves me from my task of servile toil, 5  
 Daily in the common prison else enjoined me,  
 Where I, a prisoner chained, scarce freely draw  
 The air, imprisoned also, close and damp,  
 Unwholesome draught. But here I feel amends,  
 The breath of heaven fresh blowing, pure and sweet,  
 With day-spring born; here leave me to respire. 11  
 This day a solemn feast the people hold  
 To Dagon, their sea-idol, and forbid  
 Laborious works; unwillingly this rest  
 Their superstition yields me; hence, with leave 15

Retiring from the popular noise, I seek  
 This unfrequented place to find some ease,  
 Ease to the body some, none to the mind  
 From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm  
 Of hornets armed, no sooner found alone 20  
 But rush upon me thronging, and present  
 Times past, what once I was, and what am now.  
 Oh, wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold  
 Twice by an angel, who at last, in sight  
 Of both my parents, all in flames ascended 25  
 From off the altar where an offering burned,  
 As in a fiery column charioting  
 His godlike presence, and from some great act  
 Or benefit revealed to Abraham's race?  
 Why was my breeding ordered and prescribed 30  
 As of a person separate to God,  
 Designed for great exploits, if I must die  
 Betrayed, captived, and both my eyes put out,  
 Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze,  
 To grind in brazen fetters under task 35  
 With this heaven-gifted strength? O glorious  
 strength,  
 Put to the labour of a beast, debased  
 Lower than bond-slave! Promise was that I  
 Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver:  
 Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him 40  
 Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves,  
 Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke.  
 Yet stay; let me not rashly call in doubt  
 Divine prediction: what if all foretold  
 Had been fulfilled but through mine own default?

Whom have I to complain of but myself? 46  
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,  
In what part lodged, how easily bereft me,  
Under the seal of silence could not keep,  
But weakly to a woman must reveal it, 50  
O'ercome with importunity and tears.  
O impotence of mind, in body strong!  
But what is strength without a double share  
Of wisdom? vast, unwieldy, burdensome,  
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall 55  
By weakest subtleties; not made to rule,  
But to subserve where wisdom bears command.  
God, when he gave me strength, to show withal  
How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.  
But peace; I must not quarrel with the will 60  
Of highest dispensation, which herein  
Haply had ends above my reach to know.  
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,  
And proves the source of all my miseries;  
So many, and so huge, that each apart 65  
Would ask a life to wail; but chief of all,  
O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!  
Blind among enemies! O worse than chains,  
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!  
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct, 70  
And all her various objects of delight  
Annulled, which might in part my grief have eased:  
Inferior to the vilest now become  
Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me:  
They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, exposed 75  
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,



Within doors, or without, still as a fool,  
 In power of others, never in my own;  
 Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.  
 O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon, 80  
 Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse  
 Without all hope of day!  
 O first-created beam, and thou great Word,  
 'Let there be light, and light was over all,'  
 Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree? 85  
 The sun to me is dark  
 And silent as the moon,  
 When she deserts the night,  
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.  
 Since light so necessary is to life, 90  
 And almost life itself, if it be true  
 That light is in the soul,  
 She all in every part, why was the sight  
 To such a tender ball as the eye confined,  
 So obvious and so easy to be quenched? 95  
 And not, as feeling, through all parts diffused,  
 That she might look at will through every pore?  
 Then had I not been thus exiled from light,  
 As in the land of darkness, yet in light,  
 To live a life half dead, a living death, 100  
 And buried; but, O yet more miserable!  
 Myself my sepulchre, a moving grave;  
 Buried, yet not exempt  
 By privilege of death and burial  
 From worst of other evils, pains, and wrongs; 105  
 But made hereby obnoxious more  
 To all the miseries of life,

Life in captivity  
 Among inhuman foes.  
 But who are these? for with joint pace I hear 110  
 The tread of many feet steering this way;  
 Perhaps my enemies, who come to stare  
 At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,—  
 Their daily practice to afflict me more.

*Chorus.* This, this is he; softly a while; . 115  
 Let us not break in upon him.  
 O change beyond report, thought, or belief!  
 See how he lies at random, carelessly diffused,  
 With languished head unpropt,  
 As one past hope, abandoned, 120  
 And by himself given over;  
 In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds  
 O'er-worn and soiled.  
 Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,  
 That heroic, that renowned, 125  
 Irresistible Samson? whom, unarmed,  
 No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast, could  
 withstand;  
 Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid;  
 Ran on embattled armies clad in iron,  
 And, weaponless himself, 130  
 Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery  
 Of brazen shield and spear, the hammered cuirass,  
 Chalybean tempered steel, and frock of mail  
 Adamantean proof:  
 But safest he who stood aloof, 135  
 When insupportably his foot advanced,  
 In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,

Spurned them to death by troops. The bold  
Ascalonite

Fled from his lion ramp; old warriors turned  
Their plated backs under his heel, 140  
Or grovelling soiled their crested helmets in the  
dust.

Then with what trivial weapon came to hand,  
The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of bone,  
A thousand foreskins fell, the flower of Palestine,  
In Ramath-lechi, famous to this day: 145  
Then by main force pulled up, and on his shoulders  
bore,

The gates of Azza, post and massy bar,  
Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of giants old,  
No journey of a Sabbath-day, and loaded so;  
Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up heaven.  
Which shall I first bewail, 151  
Thy bondage or lost sight,  
Prison within prison  
Inseparably dark?

Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!) 155  
The dungeon of thyself; thy soul  
(Which men enjoying sight oft without cause com-  
plain)

Imprisoned now indeed,  
In real darkness of the body dwells,  
Shut up from outward light 160  
To incorporate with gloomy night;  
For inward light, alas!  
Puts forth no visual beam.  
O mirror of our fickle state,

Since man on earth unparalleled! 165

The rarer thy example stands,

By how much from the top of wondrous glory,

Strongest of mortal men,

To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fallen.

For him I reckon not in high estate 170

Whom long descent of birth,

Or the sphere of fortune, raises;

But thee, whose strength, while virtue was her  
mate,

Might have subdued the earth,

Universally crowned with highest praises. 175

*Samson.* I hear the sound of words; their sense  
the air

Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear.

*Chorus.* He speaks; let us draw nigh. Matchless  
in might,

The glory late of Israel, now the grief!

We come, thy friends and neighbours not unknown,

From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale, 181

To visit or bewail thee; or, if better,

Counsel or consolation we may bring,

Salve to thy sores; apt words have power to  
swage

The tumours of a troubled mind, 185

And are as balm to festered wounds.

*Samson.* Your coming, friends, revives me; for I  
learn

Now of my own experience, not by talk,

How counterfeit a coin they are who 'friends'

Bear in their superscription (of the most 190

I would be understood): in prosperous days  
 They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head,  
 Not to be found, though sought. Ye see, O friends,  
 How many evils have enclosed me round; 194  
 Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me,  
 Blindness; for had I sight, confused with shame,  
 How could I once look up, or heave the head?  
 Who, like a foolish pilot, have shipwrecked  
 My vessel trusted to me from above,  
 Gloriously rigged; and for a word, a tear, 200  
 Fool! have divulged the secret gift of God  
 To a deceitful woman: tell me, friends,  
 Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool  
 In every street? do they not say, How well  
 Are come upon him his deserts? Yet why? 205  
 Immeasurable strength they might behold  
 In me; of wisdom nothing more than mean:  
 This with the other should at least have paired;  
 These two, proportioned ill, drove me transverse.

*Chorus.* Tax not divine disposal; wisest men 210  
 Have erred, and by bad women been deceived;  
 And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise.  
 Deject not then so overmuch thyself,  
 Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides.  
 Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder 215  
 Why thou should'st wed Philistian women rather  
 Than of thine own tribe fairer, or as fair,  
 At least of thy own nation, and as noble.

*Samson.* The first I saw at Timna, and she  
 pleased  
 Me; not my parents, that I sought to wed 220

The daughter of an infidel: they knew not  
 That what I motioned was of God; I knew  
 From intimate impulse, and therefore urged  
 The marriage on, that by occasion hence  
 I might begin Israel's deliverance, 225  
 The work to which I was divinely called.  
 She proving false, the next I took to wife  
 (O that I never had! fond wish too late!)  
 Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalila,  
 That specious monster, my accomplished snare.  
 I thought it lawful from my former act, 231  
 And the same end; still watching to oppress  
 Israel's oppressors. Of what now I suffer  
 She was not the prime cause, but I myself,  
 Who, vanquished with a peal of words (O weak-  
 ness!), 235  
 Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.

*Chorus.* In seeking just occasion to provoke  
 The Philistine, thy country's enemy,  
 Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness;  
 Yet Israel still serves with all his sons. 240

*Samson.* That fault I take not on me, but transfer  
 On Israel's governors and heads of tribes,  
 Who, seeing those great acts which God had done  
 Singly by me against their conquerors,  
 Acknowledged not, or not at all considered, 245  
 Deliverance offered: I, on the other side,  
 Used no ambition to commend my deeds;  
 The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the  
 doer.

But they persisted deaf, and would not seem 249

To count them things worth notice, till at length  
 Their lords, the Philistines, with gathered powers,  
 Entered Judea, seeking me, who then  
 Safe to the rock of Etham was retired;  
 Not flying, but forecasting in what place  
 To set upon them, what advantaged best. 255  
 Meanwhile the men of Judah, to prevent  
 The harass of their land, beset me round;  
 I willingly on some conditions came  
 Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me  
 To the uncircumcised a welcome prey, 260  
 Bound with two cords; but cords to me were  
 threads

Touched with the flame: on their whole host I flew  
 Unarmed, and with a trivial weapon felled  
 Their choicest youth; they only lived who fled.  
 Had Judah that day joined, or one whole tribe, 265  
 They had by this possessed the towers of Gath,  
 And lorded over them whom now they serve.  
 But what more oft, in nations grown corrupt,  
 And by their vices brought to servitude,  
 Than to love bondage more than liberty, 270  
 Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;  
 And to despise, or envy, or suspect  
 Whom God hath of his special favour raised  
 As their deliverer? if he aught begin,  
 How frequent to desert him, and at last 275  
 To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds!

*Chorus.* Thy words to my remembrance bring  
 How Succoth and the fort of Penuel  
 Their great deliverer contemned,

The matchless Gideon, in pursuit 280  
 Of Madian, and her vanquished kings;  
 And how ingrateful Ephraim  
 Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argument,  
 Not worse than by his shield and spear,  
 Defended Israel from the Ammonite, 285  
 Had not his prowess quelled their pride  
 In that sore battle when so many died  
 Without reprieve, adjudged to death  
 For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.

*Samson.* Of such examples add me to the roll.  
 Me easily indeed mine may neglect, 291  
 But God's proposed deliverance not so.

*Chorus.* Just are the ways of God,  
 And justifiable to men;  
 Unless there be who think not God at all: 295  
 If any be, they walk obscure;  
 For of such doctrine never was there school,  
 But the heart of the fool,  
 And no man therein doctor but himself.

Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just,  
 As to his own edicts found contradicting; 301  
 Then give the reins to wandering thought,  
 Regardless of his glory's diminution;  
 Till by their own perplexities involved,  
 They ravel more, still less resolved, 305  
 But never find self-satisfying solution.

As if they would confine the Interminable,  
 And tie him to his own prescript,  
 Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,  
 And hath full right to exempt 310



Whom so it pleases him by choice  
 From national obstruction, without taint  
 Of sin, or legal debt;  
 For with his own laws he can best dispense.

He would not else, who never wanted means, 315  
 Nor in respect of the enemy just cause,  
 To set his people free,  
 Have prompted this heroic Nazarite,  
 Against his vow of strictest purity,  
 To seek in marriage that fallacious bride, 320  
 Unclean, unchaste.

Down, Reason, then; at least, vain reasonings  
 down;

Though Reason here aver  
 That moral verdict quits her of unclean:  
 Unchaste was subsequent; her stain, not his. 325

But see, here comes thy reverend sire,  
 With careful step, locks white as down,  
 Old Manoa: advise  
 Forthwith how thou ought'st to receive him.

*Samson.* Ay me! another inward grief, awaked  
 With mention of that name, renews the assault. 331

*Manoa.* Brethren and men of Dan, for such ye  
 seem

Though in this uncouth place; if old respect,  
 As I suppose, towards your once gloried friend,  
 My son, now captive, hither hath informed 335  
 Your younger feet, while mine, cast back with age,  
 Came lagging after, say if he be here.

*Chorus.* As signal now in low dejected state  
 As erst in highest, behold him where he lies.

*Manoa.* O miserable change! Is this the man,  
 That invincible Samson, far renowned, 341  
 The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength  
 Equivalent to angels' walked their streets,  
 None offering fight; who, single combatant,  
 Duelled their armies ranked in proud array, 345  
 Himself an army, now unequal match  
 To save himself against a coward armed  
 At one spear's length? O ever-failing trust  
 In mortal strength! and oh, what not in man  
 Deceivable and vain! Nay, what thing good 350  
 Prayed for, but often proves our woe, our bane?  
 I prayed for children, and thought barrenness  
 In wedlock a reproach; I gained a son,  
 And such a son as all men hailed me happy:  
 Who would be now a father in my stead? 355  
 Oh, wherefore did God grant me my request,  
 And as a blessing with such pomp adorned?  
 Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt  
 Our earnest prayers,—then, given with solemn  
 hand  
 As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind? 360  
 For this did the angel twice descend? for this  
 Ordained thy nurture holy, as of a plant  
 Select and sacred? glorious for a while,  
 The miracle of men; then in an hour  
 Ensnared, assaulted, overcome, led bound, 365  
 Thy foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind,  
 Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves!  
 Alas, methinks whom God hath chosen once  
 To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,

He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall      370  
 Subject him to so foul indignities,  
 Be it but for honour's sake of former deeds.

*Samson.* Appoint not heavenly disposition, father.  
 Nothing of all these evils hath befallen me  
 But justly; I myself have brought them on,      375  
 Sole author I, sole cause: if aught seem vile,  
 As vile hath been my folly, who have profaned  
 The mystery of God, given me under pledge  
 Of vow, and have betrayed it to a woman,  
 A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.      380

This well I knew, nor was at all surprised,  
 But warned by oft experience. Did not she  
 Of Timna first betray me, and reveal  
 The secret wrested from me in her highth  
 Of nuptial love professed, carrying it straight      385  
 To them who had corrupted her, my spies  
 And rivals? In this other was there found  
 More faith, who also in her prime of love,  
 Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,  
 Though offered only, by the scent conceived      390  
 Her spurious first-born, Treason against me?  
 Thrice she assayed with flattering prayers and  
 sighs

And amorous reproaches, to win from me  
 My capital secret, in what part my strength  
 Lay stored, in what part summed, that she might  
 know;      395

Thrice I deluded her, and turned to sport  
 Her importunity, each time perceiving  
 How openly, and with what impudence

She purposed to betray me, and (which was worse  
Than undissembled hate) with what contempt 400  
She sought to make me traitor to myself.

Yet, the fourth time, when mustering all her wiles,  
With blandished parleys, feminine assaults,  
Tongue-batteries, she surceased not day nor night  
To storm me, over-watched and wearied out, 405  
At times when men seek most repose and rest,  
I yielded, and unlocked her all my heart,  
Who, with a grain of manhood well resolved,  
Might easily have shook off all her snares;  
But foul effeminacy held me yoked 410  
Her bond-slave. O indignity, O blot  
To honour and religion! servile mind  
Rewarded well with servile punishment!  
The base degree to which I now am fallen,  
These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base 415  
As was my former servitude, ignoble,  
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,  
True slavery; and that blindness worse than this,  
That saw not how degenerately I served.

*Manoa.* I cannot praise thy marriage-choices,  
son; 420

Rather approved them not; but thou didst plead  
Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st  
Find some occasion to infest our foes.  
I state not that; this I am sure: our foes  
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee 425  
Their captive, and their triumph; thou the sooner  
Temptation found'st, or over-potent charms,  
To violate the sacred trust of silence

Deposited within thee; which to have kept  
 Tacit was in thy power: true; and thou bear'st 430  
 Enough, and more, the burden of that fault;  
 Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying,  
 That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains:  
 This day the Philistines a popular feast  
 Here celebrate in Gaza, and proclaim 435  
 Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud,  
 To Dagon, as their god who hath delivered  
 Thee, Samson, bound and blind, into their hands,  
 Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a  
 slain.

So Dagon shall be magnified, and God, 440  
 Besides whom is no god, compared with idols,  
 Disglorified, blasphemed, and had in scorn  
 By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine;  
 Which to have come to pass by means of thee,  
 Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest, 445  
 Of all reproach the most with shame that ever  
 Could have befallen thee and thy father's house.

*Samson.* Father, I do acknowledge and confess  
 That I this honour, I this pomp, have brought  
 To Dagon, and advanced his praises high 450  
 Among the heathen round; to God have brought  
 Dishonour, obloquy, and oped the mouths  
 Of idolists and atheists; have brought scandal  
 To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt  
 In feeble hearts, propense enough before 455  
 To waver, or fall off and join with idols:  
 Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,  
 The anguish of my soul, that suffers not

Mine eye to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.  
 This only hope relieves me, that the strife 460  
 With me hath end; all the contest is now  
 'Twixt God and Dagon; Dagon hath presumed,  
 Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,  
 His deity comparing and preferring  
 Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure, 465  
 Will not connive, or linger, thus provoked,  
 But will arise, and his great name assert.  
 Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long receive  
 Such a discomfit as shall quite despoil him  
 Of all these boasted trophies won on me, 470  
 And with confusion blank his worshipers.

*Manoa.* With cause this hope relieves thee, and  
 these words

I as a prophecy receive; for God,  
 Nothing more certain, will not long defer  
 To vindicate the glory of his name 475  
 Against all competition, nor will long  
 Endure it doubtful whether God be Lord  
 Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done?  
 Thou must not in the meanwhile, here forgot,  
 Lie in this miserable loathsome plight 480  
 Neglected. I already have made way  
 To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat  
 About thy ransom: well they may by this  
 Have satisfied their utmost of revenge,  
 By pains and slaveries, worse than death, inflicted  
 On thee, who now no more canst do them harm. 486

*Samson.* Spare that proposal, father, spare the  
 trouble

Of that solicitation; let me here,  
 As I deserve, pay on my punishment;  
 And expiate, if possible, my crime, 490  
 Shameful garrulity. To have revealed  
 Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,  
 How heinous had the fact been, how deserving  
 Contempt and scorn of all; to be excluded  
 All friendship, and avoided as a blab, 495  
 The mark of fool set on his front! But I  
 God's counsel have not kept, his holy secret  
 Presumptuously have published, impiously,  
 Weakly at least, and shamefully: a sin  
 That Gentiles in their parables condemn 500  
 To their abyss and horrid pains confined.

*Manoa.* Be penitent, and for thy fault contrite,  
 But act not in thy own affliction, son;  
 Repent the sin; but, if the punishment  
 Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids; 505  
 Or the execution leave to high disposal,  
 And let another hand, not thine, exact  
 Thy penal forfeit from thyself. Perhaps  
 God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;  
 Who evermore approves and more accepts 510  
 (Best pleased with humble and filial submission)  
 Him who, imploring mercy, sues for life,  
 Than who, self-rigorous, chooses death as due;  
 Which argues over-just, and self-displeased  
 For self-offence, more than for God offended. 515  
 Reject not, then, what offered means who knows  
 But God hath set before us to return thee  
 Home to thy country and his sacred house,

Where thou may'st bring thy offerings, to avert  
His further ire, with prayers and vows renewed. 520

*Samson.* His pardon I implore; but as for  
life,

To what end should I seek it? When in strength  
All mortals I excelled, and great in hopes,  
With youthful courage, and magnanimous thoughts  
Of birth from Heaven foretold and high exploits,  
Full of divine instinct, after some proof 526

Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond  
The sons of Anak, famous now and blazed,  
Fearless of danger, like a petty god  
I walked about, admired of all, and dreaded 530

On hostile ground, none daring my affront;  
Then, swollen with pride, into the snare I fell  
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,  
Softened with pleasure and voluptuous life,  
At length to lay my head and hallowed pledge 535

Of all my strength in the lascivious lap  
Of a deceitful concubine, who shore me  
Like a tame wether, all my precious fleece,  
Then turned me out ridiculous, despoiled,  
Shaven, and disarmed among my enemies. 540

*Chorus.* Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,  
Which many a famous warrior overturns,  
Thou could'st repress; nor did the dancing ruby,  
Sparkling out-poured, the flavour, or the smell,  
Or taste, that cheers the heart of gods and men,  
Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream. 546

*Samson.* Wherever fountain or fresh current  
flowed



Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure  
 With touch ethereal of Heaven's fiery rod,  
 I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying 550  
 Thirst, and refreshed; nor envied them the grape  
 Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.

*Chorus.* O madness! to think use of strongest  
 wines

And strongest drinks our chief support of health,  
 When God with these forbidden made choice to  
 rear 555

His mighty champion, strong above compare,  
 Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.

*Samson.* But what availed this temperance, not  
 complete

Against another object more enticing?  
 What boots it at one gate to make defence, 560  
 And at another to let in the foe,  
 Effeminately vanquished? by which means,  
 Now blind, disheartened, shamed, dishonoured,  
 quelled,

To what can I be useful? wherein serve  
 My nation, and the work from Heaven imposed?  
 But to sit idle on the household hearth, 566  
 A burdenous drone; to visitants a gaze,  
 Or pitied object; these redundant locks,  
 Robustious to no purpose, clustering down,  
 Vain monument of strength; till length of years 570  
 And sedentary numbness craze my limbs  
 To a contemptible old age obscure.  
 Here rather let me drudge, and earn my bread,  
 Till vermin, or the draff of servile food,

Consume me, and oft-invocated death 575  
 Hasten the welcome end of all my pains.

*Manoa.* Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with  
 that gift

Which was expressly given thee to annoy them?  
 Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,  
 Inglorious, unemployed, with age outworn. 580  
 But God, who caused a fountain at thy prayer  
 From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to allay  
 After the brunt of battle, can as easy  
 Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,  
 Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast; 585  
 And I persuade me so; why else this strength  
 Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?  
 His might continues in thee not for naught,  
 Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

*Samson.* All otherwise to me my thoughts portend: 590

That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,  
 Nor the other light of life continue long,  
 But yield to double darkness nigh at hand;  
 So much I feel my genial spirits droop,  
 My hopes all flat; Nature within me seems 595  
 In all her functions weary of herself;  
 My race of glory run, and race of shame,  
 And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

*Manoa.* Believe not these suggestions, which  
 proceed

From anguish of the mind, and humours black 600  
 That mingle with thy fancy. I, however,  
 Must not omit a father's timely care

To prosecute the means of thy deliverance  
 By ransom or how else: meanwhile be calm,  
 And healing words from these thy friends admit. 605

*Samson.* Oh that torment should not be confined  
 To the body's wounds and sores,

With maladies innumerable  
 In heart, head, breast, and reins;  
 But must secret passage find 610  
 To the inmost mind,

There exercise all his fierce accidents,  
 And on her purest spirits prey,  
 As on entrails, joints, and limbs,  
 With answerable pains, but more intense, 615  
 Though void of corporal sense!

My griefs not only pain me  
 As a lingering disease,  
 But, finding no redress, ferment and rage;  
 Nor less than wounds immedicable 620  
 Rankle, and fester, and gangrene,  
 To black mortification.

Thoughts, my tormentors, armed with deadly  
 stings,

Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,  
 Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise 625

Dire inflammation, which no cooling herb  
 Or med'cinal liquor can assuage,  
 Nor breath of vernal air from snowy Alp.  
 Sleep hath forsook and given me o'er  
 To death's benumbing opium as my only cure: 630  
 Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,  
 And sense of Heaven's desertion.

I was his nursling once and choice delight,  
His destined from the womb,  
Promised by heavenly message twice descending.  
Under his special eye. 636

Abstemious I grew up and thrived amain;  
He led me on to mightiest deeds,  
Above the nerve of mortal arm,  
Against the uncircumcised, our enemies: 640

But now hath cast me off as never known,  
And to those cruel enemies,  
Whom I by his appointment had provoked,  
Left me all helpless, with the irreparable loss  
Of sight, reserved alive to be repeated 645

The subject of their cruelty or scorn.  
Nor am I in the list of them that hope;  
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless.  
This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,  
No long petition: speedy death, 650  
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.

*Chorus.* Many are the sayings of the wise,  
In ancient and in modern books enrolled,  
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude;  
And to the bearing well of all calamities, 655  
All chances incident to man's frail life,  
Consolatories writ

With studied argument, and much persuasion  
sought,  
Lenient of grief and anxious thought.

But with the afflicted in his pangs their sound 660  
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune  
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,

Unless he feel within  
 Some source of consolation from above,  
 Secret refreshings that repair his strength 665  
 And fainting spirits uphold.

God of our fathers! what is man,  
 That thou towards him with hand so various,  
 Or might I say contrarious,  
 Temper'st thy providence through his short course,  
 Not evenly, as thou rul'st 671  
 The angelic orders, and inferior creatures mute,  
 Irrational and brute?

Nor do I name of men the common rout,  
 That wandering loose about, 675  
 Grow up and perish as the summer fly,  
 Heads without name, no more remembered;  
 But such as thou hast solemnly elected,  
 With gifts and graces eminently adorned,  
 To some great work, thy glory, 680  
 And people's safety, which in part they effect:  
 Yet towards these, thus dignified, thou oft,  
 Amidst their highth of noon,  
 Changest thy countenance and thy hand, with no  
 regard

Of highest favours past 685  
 From thee on them, or them to thee of service.

Nor only dost degrade them, or remit  
 To life obscured, which were a fair dismissal,  
 But throw'st them lower than thou didst exalt them  
 high,—

Unseemly falls in human eye, 690  
 Too grievous for the trespass or omission;

Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword  
 Of heathen and profane, their carcasses  
 To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captived,  
 Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,  
 And condemnation of the ungrateful multitude. 696  
 If these they scape, perhaps in poverty  
 With sickness and disease thou bow'st them  
 down,

Painful diseases and deformed,  
 In crude old age; 700  
 Though not disordinate, yet causeless suffering  
 The punishment of dissolute days: in fine,  
 Just or unjust alike seem miserable,  
 For oft alike both come to evil end.

So deal not with this once thy glorious cham-  
 pion, 705  
 The image of thy strength, and mighty minister.  
 What do I beg? how hast thou dealt already!  
 Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn  
 His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.

But who is this, what thing of sea or land? 710  
 Female of sex it seems,  
 That so bedecked, ornate, and gay,  
 Comes this way sailing,  
 Like a stately ship  
 Of Tarsus, bound for the isles 715  
 Of Javan or Gadire,  
 With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,  
 Sails filled, and streamers waving,  
 Courted by all the winds that hold them play;  
 An amber scent of odorous perfume 720

Her harbinger, a damsel train behind.  
 Some rich Philistian matron she may seem;  
 And now, at nearer view, no other certain  
 Than Dalila thy wife.

*Samson.* My wife? my traitress! let her not come  
 near me. 725

*Chorus.* Yet on she moves; now stands and eyes  
 thee fixed,  
 About to have spoke; but now, with head declined,  
 Like a fair flower surcharged with dew, she  
 weeps,

And words addressed seem into tears dissolved,  
 Wetting the borders of her silken veil: 730  
 But now again she makes address to speak.

*Dalila.* With doubtful feet and wavering resolu-  
 tion  
 I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson;  
 Which to have merited, without excuse,  
 I cannot but acknowledge; yet if tears 735  
 May expiate (though the fact more evil drew  
 In the perverse event than I foresaw),  
 My penance hath not slackened, though my pardon  
 No way assured. But conjugal affection,  
 Prevailing over fear and timorous doubt, 740  
 Hath led me on, desirous to behold  
 Once more thy face, and know of thy estate,  
 If aught in my ability may serve  
 To lighten what thou suffer'st, and appease  
 Thy mind with what amends is in my power; 745  
 Though late, yet in some part to recompense  
 My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

*Samson.* Out, out, hyæna! These are thy wanted  
arts,

And arts of every woman false like thee,  
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray; 750  
Then, as repentant, to submit, beseech,  
And reconcilment move with feigned remorse,  
Confess, and promise wonders in her change;  
Not truly penitent, but chief to try  
Her husband, how far urged his patience bears, 755  
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:  
Then, with more cautious and instructed skill  
Again transgresses, and again submits;  
That wisest and best men, full oft beguiled,  
With goodness principled not to reject 760  
The penitent, but ever to forgive,  
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,  
Entangled with a poisonous bosom-snake,  
If not by quick destruction soon cut off,  
As I by thee, to ages an example. 765

*Dalila.* Yet hear me, Samson; not that I en-  
deavour

To lessen or extenuate my offence,  
But that, on the other side, if it be weighed  
By itself, with aggravations not surcharged,  
Or else with just allowance counterpoised, 770  
I may, if possible, thy pardon find  
The easier towards me, or thy hatred less.  
First granting, as I do, it was a weakness  
In me, but incident to all our sex,  
Curiosity, inquisitive, importune 775  
Of secrets, then with like infirmity



To publish them,—both common female faults :  
 Was it not weakness also to make known  
 For importunity, that is for naught,  
 Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety? 780  
 To what I did thou show'st me first the way.  
 But I to enemies revealed, and should not!  
 Nor should'st thou have trusted that to woman's  
 frailty:

Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.  
 Let weakness, then, with weakness come to parle,  
 So near related, or the same of kind; 786  
 Thine forgive mine; that men may censure thine  
 The gentler, if severely thou exact not  
 More strength from me than in thyself was found.  
 And what if love, which thou interpret'st hate, 790  
 The jealousy of love, powerful of sway  
 In human hearts, nor less in mine towards thee,  
 Caused what I did? I saw thee mutable  
 Of fancy; feared lest one day thou would'st leave  
 me

As her at Timna; sought by all means, therefore,  
 How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest: 796  
 No better way I saw than by importuning  
 To learn thy secrets, get into my power  
 Thy key of strength and safety. Thou wilt say,  
 'Why then revealed?' I was assured by those 800  
 Who tempted me, that nothing was designed  
 Against thee but safe custody and hold:  
 That made for me; I knew that liberty  
 Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,  
 While I at home sat full of cares and fears, 805

Wailing thy absence in my widowed bed;  
 Here I should still enjoy thee, day and night,  
 Mine and love's prisoner, not the Philistines',  
 Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,  
 Fearless at home of partners in my love. 810

These reasons in Love's law have passed for good,  
 Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps;  
 And love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much  
 woe,

Yet always pity or pardon hath obtained.  
 Be not unlike all others, not austere 815  
 As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.  
 If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,  
 In uncompassionate anger do not so.

*Samson.* How cunningly the sorceress displays  
 Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine! 820  
 That malice, not repentance, brought thee hither  
 By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, the example,  
 I led the way; bitter reproach, but true;  
 I to myself was false ere thou to me.

Such pardon, therefore, as I give my folly, 825  
 Take to thy wicked deed; which when thou seest  
 Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,  
 Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather  
 Confess it feigned. Weakness is thy excuse,  
 And I believe it; weakness to resist 830

Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,  
 What murderer, what traitor, parricide,  
 Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?  
 All wickedness is weakness: that plea, therefore,  
 With God or man will gain thee no remission. 835

But love constrained thee! call it furious rage  
 To satisfy thy lust: love seeks to have love;  
 My love how could'st thou hope, who took'st the  
   way

To raise in me inexpiable hate,  
 Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betrayed? 840  
 In vain thou striv'st to cover shame with shame,  
 Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.

*Dalila.* Since thou determin'st weakness for no  
   plea

In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,  
 Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides, 845  
 What sieges girt me round, ere I consented;  
 Which might have awed the best-resolved of men,  
 The constantest, to have yielded without blame.

It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,  
 That wrought with me: thou know'st the magis-  
   trates 850

And princes of my country came in person,  
 Solicited, commanded, threatened, urged,  
 Adjured by all the bonds of civil duty  
 And of religion; pressed how just it was,  
 How honourable, how glorious, to entrap 855

A common enemy, who had destroyed  
 Such numbers of our nation: and the priest  
 Was not behind, but ever at my ear,  
 Preaching how meritorious with the gods  
 It would be to ensnare an irreligious 860  
 Dishonourer of Dagon. What had I  
 To oppose against such powerful arguments?  
 Only my love of thee held long debate,

And combated in silence all these reasons  
With hard contest. At length, that grounded  
maxim, 865

So rife and celebrated in the mouths  
Of wisest men, that to the public good  
Private respects must yield, with grave authority  
Took full possession of me, and prevailed;  
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining. 870  
*Samson.* I thought where all thy circling wiles  
would end:

In feigned religion, smooth hypocrisy!  
But had thy love, still odiously pretended,  
Been, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee  
Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.  
I, before all the daughters of my tribe 876  
And of my nation, chose thee from among  
My enemies, loved thee, as too well thou knew'st;  
Too well; unbosomed all my secrets to thee,  
Not out of levity, but overpowered 880  
By thy request, who could deny thee nothing:  
Yet now am judged an enemy. Why, then,  
Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband,  
Then, as since then, thy country's foe professed?  
Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave 885  
Parents and country; nor was I their subject,  
Nor under their protection, but my own;  
Thou mine, not theirs. If aught against my life  
Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,  
Against the law of nature, law of nations; 890  
No more thy country, but an impious crew  
Of men conspiring to uphold their state

By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends  
 For which our country is a name so dear;  
 Not therefore to be obeyed. But zeal moved thee;  
 To please thy gods thou didst it! gods unable 896  
 To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes  
 But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction  
 Of their own deity, gods cannot be;  
 Less therefore to be pleased, obeyed, or feared. 900  
 These false pretexts and varnished colours failing,  
 Bare in thy guilt, how foul must thou appear!

*Dalila.* In argument with men a woman ever  
 Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.

*Samson.* For want of words, no doubt, or lack of  
 breath! 905

Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

*Dalila.* I was a fool, too rash, and quite mistaken  
 In what I thought would have succeeded best.  
 Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson;  
 Afford me place to show what recompense 910  
 Towards thee I intend for what I have misdone,,  
 Misguided; only what remains past cure  
 Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist  
 To afflict thyself in vain: though sight be lost,  
 Life yet hath many solaces, enjoyed 915  
 Where other senses want not their delights,  
 At home, in leisure and domestic ease,  
 Exempt from many a care and chance to which  
 Eyesight exposes, daily, men abroad.  
 I to the lords will intercede, not doubting 920  
 Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee  
 From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide

With me, where my redoubled love and care,  
 With nursing diligence, to me glad office,  
 May ever tend about thee to old age, 925  
 With all things grateful cheered, and so supplied,  
 That what by me thou hast lost thou least shall  
 miss.

*Samson.* No, no; of my condition take no care;  
 It fits not; thou and I long since are twain;  
 Nor think me so unwary or accursed 930  
 To bring my feet again into the snare  
 Where once I have been caught. I know thy  
 trains,  
 Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils;  
 Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms,  
 No more on me have power; their force is nulled;  
 So much of adder's wisdom I have learned, 936  
 To fence my ear against thy sorceries.  
 If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men  
 Loved, honoured, feared me, thou alone could hate  
 me,  
 Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me; 940  
 How would'st thou use me now, blind, and thereby  
 Deceivable, in most things as a child  
 Helpless, thence easily contemned and scorned,  
 And last neglected! How would'st thou insult,  
 When I must live uxorious to thy will 945  
 In perfect thralldom! how again betray me,  
 Bearing my words and doing to the lords  
 To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile!  
 This jail I count the house of liberty  
 To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter. 950

*Dalila.* Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.

*Samson.* Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake

My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.  
 At distance I forgive thee; go with that;  
 Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works 955  
 It hath brought forth to make thee memorable  
 Among illustrious women, faithful wives;  
 Cherish thy hastened widowhood with the gold  
 Of matrimonial treason: so farewell.

*Dalila.* I see thou art implacable, more deaf 960  
 To prayers than winds and seas; yet winds to seas  
 Are reconciled at length, and sea to shore:  
 Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,  
 Eternal tempest never to be calmed.  
 Why do I humble thus myself, and suing 965  
 For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate;  
 Bid go with evil omen, and the brand  
 Of infamy upon my name denounced?  
 To mix with thy concernments I desist  
 Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own. 970  
 Fame, if not double-faced, is double-mouthed,  
 And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;  
 On both his wings, one black, the other white,  
 Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.  
 My name, perhaps, among the circumcised 975  
 In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,  
 To all posterity may stand defamed,  
 With malediction mentioned, and the blot  
 Of falsehood most unconjugal traduced.

But in my country, where I most desire, 980  
 In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath,  
 I shall be named among the famousest  
 Of women, sung at solemn festivals,  
 Living and dead recorded, who, to save  
 Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose 985  
 Above the faith of wedlock bands; my tomb  
 With odours visited and annual flowers;  
 Not less renowned than in Mount Ephraim  
 Jael, who, with inhospitable guile,  
 Smote Sisera sleeping, through the temples nailed.  
 Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy 991  
 The public marks of honour and reward  
 Conferred upon me for the piety  
 Which to my country I was judged to have shown.  
 At this whoever envies or repines, 995  
 I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

*Chorus.* She's gone; a manifest serpent by her  
 sting  
 Discovered in the end, till now concealed.

*Samson.* So let her go: God sent her to debase  
 me,  
 And aggravate my folly, who committed 1000  
 To such a viper his most sacred trust  
 Of secrecy, my safety, and my life.

*Chorus.* Yet beauty, though injurious, hath  
 strange power,  
 After offence returning, to regain  
 Love once possessed, nor can be easily 1005  
 Repulsed, without much inward passion felt,  
 And secret sting of amorous remorse.



*Samson.* Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord  
 end,  
 Not wedlock treachery, endangering life. 1009  
*Chorus.* It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,  
 Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit,  
 That woman's love can win, or long inherit;  
 But what it is, hard is to say,  
 Harder to hit,  
 Which way soever men refer it; 1015  
 Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day  
 Or seven though one should musing sit.  
 If any of these, or all, the Timnian bride  
 Had not so soon preferred  
 Thy paranymp, worthless to thee compared, 1020  
 Successor in thy bed;  
 Nor both so loosely disallied  
 Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherously  
 Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.  
 Is it for that such outward ornament 1025  
 Was lavished on their sex, that inward gifts  
 Were left for haste unfinished, judgment scant,  
 Capacity not raised to apprehend  
 Or value what is best  
 In choice, but ofttest to affect the wrong? 1030  
 Or was too much of self-loved mixed,  
 Of constancy no root infixed,  
 That either they love nothing, or not long?  
 Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best  
 Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil, 1035  
 Soft, modest, meek, demure,  
 Once joined, the contrary she proves, a thorn

Intestine, far within defensive arms  
 A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue  
 Adverse and turbulent; or by her charms 1040  
 Draws him awry, enslaved  
 With dotage, and his sense depraved  
 To folly and shameful deeds, which ruin ends.  
 What pilot so expert but needs must wreck,  
 Embarked with such a steers-mate at the helm?

Favoured of Heaven, who finds 1046

One virtuous, rarely found,  
 That in domestic good combines!  
 Happy that house! his way to peace is smooth:  
 But virtue which breaks through all opposition,  
 And all temptation can remove, 1051  
 Most shines and most is acceptable above.

Therefore God's universal law  
 Gave to the man despotic power  
 Over his female in due awe, 1055  
 Nor from that right to part an hour,  
 Smile she or lour:  
 So shall he least confusion draw  
 On his whole life, not swayed  
 By female usurpation, nor dismayed. 1060

But had we best retire? I see a storm.

*Samson.* Fair days have oft contracted wind and  
 rain.

*Chorus.* But this another king of tempest brings.

*Samson.* Be less abstruse; my riddling days are  
 past.

*Chorus.* Look now for no enchanting voice, nor  
 fear 1065

The bait of honeyed words; a rougher tongue  
 Draws hitherward; I know him by his stride,  
 The giant Harapha of Gath; his look  
 Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.  
 Comes he in peace? What wind hath blown him  
 hither 1070

I less conjecture than when first I saw  
 The sumptuous Dalila floating this way:  
 His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.

*Samson.* Or peace or not, alike to me he  
 comes.

*Chorus.* His fraught we soon shall know; he now  
 arrives. 1075

*Harapha.* I come not, Samson, to condole thy  
 chance,

As these perhaps; yet wish it had not been,  
 Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath;  
 Men call me Harapha, of stock renowned  
 As Og, or Anak, and the Emims old 1080  
 That Kiriathaim held: thou know'st me now,  
 If thou at all art known. Much I have heard  
 Of thy prodigious might and feats performed,  
 Incredible to me, in this displeas'd,  
 That I was never present on the place 1085  
 Of those encounters, where we might have tried  
 Each other's force in camp or listed field;  
 And now am come to see of whom such noise  
 Hath walked about, and each limb to survey,  
 If thy appearance answer loud report. 1090

*Samson.* The way to know were not to see, but  
 taste.

*Harapha.* Dost thou already single me? I  
thought

Gyves and the mill had tamed thee. O that fortune  
Had brought me to the field where thou art famed  
To have wrought such wonders with an ass's jaw!  
I should have forced thee soon with other arms, 1096  
Or left thy carcass where the ass lay thrown;  
So had the glory of prowess been recovered  
To Palestine, won by a Philistine  
From the unforeskinned race, of whom thou bear'st  
The highest name for valiant acts; that honour, 1101  
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,  
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

*Samson.* Boast not of what thou would'st have  
done, but do 1104  
What then thou would'st; thou seest it in thy hand.

*Harapha.* To combat with a blind man I disdain,  
And thou hast need much washing to be touched.

*Samson.* Such usage as your honourable lords  
Afford me, assassinated and betrayed;  
Who durst not with their whole united powers 1110  
In fight withstand me single and unarmed,  
Nor in the house with chamber-ambushes  
Close-banded durst attack me, no, not sleeping,  
Till they had hired a woman with their gold,  
Breaking her marriage-faith, to circumvent me. 1115  
Therefore, without feign'd shifts, let be assigned  
Some narrow place enclosed, where sight may give  
thee,

Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;  
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet

And brigandine of brass, thy broad habergeon,  
 Vant-brace and greaves and gauntlet; add thy  
 spear, 1121

A weaver's beam, and seven-times-folded shield:  
 I only with an oaken staff will meet thee,  
 And raise such outcries on thy clattered iron,  
 Which long shall not withhold me from thy head,  
 That in a little time, while breath remains thee, 1126  
 Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath, to boast  
 Again in safety what thou would'st have done  
 To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

*Harapha.* Thou durst not thus disparage glori-  
 ous arms 1130

Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,  
 Their ornament and safety, had not spells  
 And black enchantments, some magician's art,  
 Armed thee or charmed thee strong, which thou  
 from Heaven 1134

Feign'dst at thy birth was given thee in thy hair,  
 Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs  
 Were bristles ranged like those that ridge the back  
 Of chafed wild boars or ruffled porcupines.

*Samson.* I know no spells, use no forbidden arts;  
 My trust is in the living God, who gave me 1140  
 At my nativity this strength, diffused  
 No less through all my sinews, joints, and bones,  
 Than thine, while I preserved these locks unshorn,  
 The pledge of my unviolated vow.  
 For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy God, 1145  
 Go to his temple, invoke his aid  
 With solemnest devotion, spread before him

How highly it concerns his glory now  
 To frustrate and dissolve these magic spells,  
 Which I to be the power of Israel's God 1150  
 Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,  
 Offering to combat thee, his champion bold,  
 With the utmost of his godhead seconded:  
 Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow  
 Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.

*Harapha.* Presume not on thy God, whate'er  
 he be; 1156

Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off  
 Quite from his people, and delivered up  
 Into thy enemies' hand; permitted them  
 To put out both thine eyes, and fettered send thee  
 Into the common prison, there to grind 1161  
 Among the slaves and asses, thy comrades,  
 As good for nothing else, no better service  
 With those thy boisterous locks; no worthy match  
 For valour to assail, nor by the sword 1165  
 Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,  
 But by the barber's razor best subdued.

*Samson.* All these indignities, for such they are  
 From thine, these evils I deserve and more,  
 Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me 1170  
 Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon,  
 Whose ear is ever open, and his eye  
 Gracious to re-admit the suppliant;  
 In confidence whereof I once again  
 Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight, 1175  
 By combat to decide whose god is God,  
 Thine, or whom I with Israel's sons adore.

*Harapha.* Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in  
trusting  
He will accept thee to defend his cause,  
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber! 1180

*Samson.* Tongue-doughty giant, how dost thou  
prove me these?

*Harapha.* Is not thy nation subject to our lords?  
Their magistrates confessed it when they took  
thee

As a league-breaker, and delivered bound  
Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed 1185  
Notorious murder on those thirty men  
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm;  
Then, like a robber, stripp'dst them of their  
robes?

The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,  
Went up with armèd powers thee only seeking, 1190  
To others did no violence nor spoil.

*Samson.* Among the daughters of the Philistines  
I chose a wife, which argued me no foe,  
And in your city held my nuptial feast;  
But your ill-meaning politician lords, 1195  
Under pretence of bridal friends and guests,  
Appointed to await me thirty spies,  
Who, threatening cruel death, constrained the bride  
To wring from me, and tell to them, my secret,  
That solved the riddle which I had proposed. 1200  
When I perceived all set on enmity,  
As on my enemies, wherever chanced,  
I used hostility, and took their spoil,  
To pay my underminers in their coin.

My nation was subjected to your lords! 1205  
 It was the force of conquest: force with force  
 Is well ejected when the conquered can.  
 But I, a private person, whom my country  
 As a league-breaker gave up bound, presumed  
 Single rebellion, and did hostile acts! 1210  
 I was no private, but a person raised  
 With strength sufficient and command from Heaven  
 To free my country: if their servile minds  
 Me, their deliverer sent, would not receive,  
 But to their masters gave me up for naught, 1215  
 The unworthier they; whence to this day they  
 serve.

I was to do my part from Heaven assigned,  
 And had performed it if mine own offence  
 Had not disabled me, not all your force.  
 These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant, 1220  
 Though by his blindness maimed for high attempts,  
 Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,  
 As a petty enterprise of small enforce.

*Harapha.* With thee, a man condemned, a slave  
 enrolled,

Due by the law to capital punishment? 1225  
 To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

*Samson.* Can'st thou for this, vain boaster, to  
 survey me,

To descant on my strength, and give thy verdict?  
 Come nearer; part not hence so slight informed;  
 But take good heed my hand survey not thee. 1230

*Harapha.* O Baal-zebub! can my ears unused  
 Hear these dishonours, and not render death?



*Samson.* No man withholds thee; nothing from  
thy hand  
Fear I incurable; bring up thy van;  
My heels are fettered, but my fist is free. 1235

*Harapha.* This insolence other kind of answer  
fits.

*Samson.* Go, baffled coward, lest I run upon thee,  
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,  
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,  
Or swing thee in the air, then dash thee down, 1240  
To the hazard of thy brains and shattered sides.

*Harapha.* By Astaroth, ere long thou shalt  
lament

These braveries, in irons loaden on thee.

*Chorus.* His giantship is gone somewhat crest-  
fallen,  
Stalking with less unconscionable strides, 1245  
And lower looks; but in a sultry chafe.

*Samson.* I dread him not, nor all his giant brood,  
Though fame divulge him father of five sons,  
All of gigantic size, Goliah chief.

*Chorus.* He will directly to the lords, I fear, 1250  
And with malicious counsel stir them up  
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.

*Samson.* He must allege some cause, and offered  
fight  
Will not dare mention, lest a question rise.  
Whether he durst accept the offer or not; 1255  
And that he durst not plain enough appeared.  
Much more affliction than already felt  
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain,

If they intend advantage of my labours,  
 The work of many hands, which earns my keeping,  
 With no small profit daily to my owners. 1261  
 But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove  
 My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence;  
 The worst that he can give, to me the best.  
 Yet so it may fall out, because their end 1265  
 Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine  
 Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.

*Chorus.* Oh how comely it is, and how reviving  
 To the spirits of just men long oppressed,  
 When God into the hands of their deliverer 1270  
 Puts invincible might,  
 To quell the mighty of the earth, the oppressor,  
 The brute and boisterous force of violent men,  
 Hardy and industrious to support  
 Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue 1275  
 The righteous, and all such as honour truth!  
 He all their ammunition  
 And feats of war defeats,  
 With plain heroic magnitude of mind  
 And celestial vigour armed; 1280  
 Their armouries and magazines contemns,  
 Renders them useless, while  
 With winged expedition  
 Swift as the lightning glance he executes  
 His errand on the wicked, who, surprised, 1285  
 Lose their defence, distracted and amazed.

But patience is more oft the exercise  
 Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,  
 Making them each his own deliverer,

And victor over all 1290  
 That tyranny or fortune can inflict.  
 Either of these is in thy lot,  
 Samson, with might endued  
 Above the sons of men; but sight bereaved  
 May chance to number thee with those 1295  
 Whom patience finally must crown.

This idol's day hath been to thee no day of  
 rest,  
 Labouring thy mind  
 More than the working day thy hands.  
 And yet perhaps more trouble is behind: 1300  
 For I descry this way  
 Some other tending; in his hand  
 A sceptre or quaint staff he bears,  
 Comes on amain, speed in his look.  
 By his habit I discern him now 1305  
 A public officer, and now at hand.  
 His message will be short and voluble.

*Officer.* Ebrews, the prisoner Samson here I  
 seek.

*Chorus.* His manacles remark him; there he  
 sits.

*Officer.* Samson, to thee our lords thus bid me  
 say: 1310

This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,  
 With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and games;  
 Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,  
 And now some public proof thereof require  
 To honour this great feast and great assembly. 1315  
 Rise, therefore, with all speed, and come along,

Where I will see thee heartened and fresh clad,  
To appear as fits before the illustrious lords.

*Samson.* Thou know'st I am an Ebrew ; therefore  
tell them

Our law forbids at their religious rites 1320  
My presence: for that cause I cannot come.

*Officer.* This answer, be assured, will not content  
them.

*Samson.* Have they not sword-players, and every  
sort

Of gymnastic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners, 1324  
Jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics,

But they must pick me out, with shackles tired,  
And over-laboured at their public mill,

To make them sport with blind activity?

Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels,

On my refusal, to distress me more, 1330

Or make a game of my calamities?

Return the way thou cam'st ; I will not come.

*Officer.* Regard thyself ; this will offend them  
highly.

*Samson.* Myself? my conscience, and internal  
peace.

Can they think me so broken, so debased 1335

With corporeal servitude, that my mind ever

Will condescend to such absurd commands?

Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,

And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief,

To show them feats, and play before their god,—

The worst of all indignities, yet on me 1341

Joined with extreme contempt? I will not come.

*Officer.* My message was imposed on me with  
speed,

Brooks no delay: is this thy resolution?

*Samson.* So take it with what speed thy message  
needs. 1345

*Officer.* I am sorry what this stoutness will pro-  
duce.

*Samson.* Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow  
indeed.

*Chorus.* Consider, Samson; matters now are  
strained

Up to the highth, whether to hold or break:

He's gone, and who knows how he may report 1350

Thy words by adding fuel to the flame?

Expect another message, more imperious,

More lordly thundering than thou well wilt bear.

*Samson.* Shall I abuse this consecrated gift  
Of strength, again returning with my hair 1355

After my great transgression; so requite

Favour renewed, and add a greater sin

By prostituting holy things to idols,

A Nazarite, in place abominable,

Vaunting my strength in honour to their Dagon?

Besides how vile, contemptible, ridiculous, 1361

What act more execrably unclean, profane?

*Chorus.* Yet with this strength thou serv'st the  
Philistines

Idolatrous, uncircumcised, unclean.

*Samson.* Not in their idol-worship, but by labour  
Honest and lawful to deserve my food 1366

Of those who have me in their civil power.

*Chorus.* Where the heart joins not, outward acts  
defile not.

*Samson.* Where outward force constrains, the  
sentence holds:

But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon, 1370  
Not dragging? The Philistian lords command;  
Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,  
I do it freely, venturing to displease  
God for the fear of man, and man prefer,  
Set God behind: which, in his jealousy, 1375  
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.  
Yet that he may dispense with me, or thee,  
Present in temples at idolatrous rites,  
For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt.

*Chorus.* How thou wilt here come off surmounts  
my reach. 1380

*Samson.* Be of good courage; I begin to feel  
Some rousing motions in me, which dispose  
To something extraordinary my thoughts.  
I with this messenger will go along,  
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour 1385  
Our Law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.  
If there be aught of presage in the mind,  
This day will be remarkable in my life  
By some great act, or of my days the last.

*Chorus.* In time thou hast resolved; the man  
returns. 1390

*Officer.* Samson, this second message from our  
lords

To thee I am bid say: Art thou our slave,  
Our captive, at the public mill our drudge,

And dar'st thou, at our sending and command,  
 Dispute thy coming? come without delay; 1395  
 Or we shall find such engines to assail  
 And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,  
 Though thou wert firmlier fastened than a rock.

*Samson.* I could be well content to try their art,  
 Which to no few of them would prove pernicious;  
 Yet knowing their advantages too many, 1401  
 Because they shall not trail me through their streets  
 Like a wild beast, I am content to go.  
 Masters' commands come with a power resistless  
 To such as owe them absolute subjection; 1405  
 And for a life who will not change his purpose  
 (So mutable are all the ways of men)?  
 Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply  
 Scandalous or forbidden in our Law.

*Officer.* I praise thy resolution; doff these links:  
 By this compliance thou wilt win the lords 1411  
 To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

*Samson.* Brethren, farewell; your company along  
 I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them  
 To see me girt with friends; and how the sight  
 Of me, as of a common enemy, 1416  
 So dreaded once, may now exasperate them,  
 I know not. Lords are lordliest in their wine;  
 And the well-feasted priest then soonest fired  
 With zeal, if aught religion seemed concerned;  
 No less the people, on their holy-days, 1421  
 Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable.  
 Happen what may, of me expect to hear  
 Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy

Our God, our Law, my nation, or myself; 1425  
 The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

*Chorus.* Go, and the Holy One  
 Of Israel be thy guide  
 To what may serve his glory best, and spread his  
 name

Great among the heathen round; 1430  
 Send thee the angel of thy birth, to stand  
 Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field  
 Rode up in flames after his message told  
 Of thy conception, and be now a shield  
 Of fire; that Spirit that first rushed on thee 1435  
 In the camp of Dan,

Be efficacious in thee now at need!  
 For never was from Heaven imparted  
 Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,  
 As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen. 1440  
 But wherefore comes old Manoa in such haste  
 With youthful steps? Much livelier than erewhile  
 He seems: supposing here to find his son,  
 Or of him bringing to us some glad news?

*Manoa.* Peace with you, brethren: my induce-  
 ment hither 1445  
 Was not at present here to find my son,  
 By order of the lords new parted hence  
 To come and play before them at their feast.  
 I heard all as I came; the city rings,  
 And numbers thither flock: I had no will, 1450  
 Lest I should see him forced to things unseemly.  
 But that which moved my coming now was  
 chiefly



To give ye part with me what hope I have  
With good success to work his liberty.

*Chorus.* That hope would much rejoice us to  
partake 1455

With thee: say, reverend sire; we thirst to hear.

*Manoa.* I have attempted, one by one, the lords,  
Either at home, or through the high street passing,  
With supplication prone and father's tears, 1459

To accept of ransom for my son, their prisoner.  
Some much averse I found, and wondrous harsh,  
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;  
That part most revered Dagon and his priests:  
Others more moderate seeming, but their aim  
Private reward, for which both God and State 1465

They easily would set to sale: a third  
More generous far and civil, who confessed  
They had enough revenged, having reduced  
Their foe to misery beneath their fears;  
The rest was magnanimity to remit, - 1470  
If some convenient ransom were proposed.

What noise or shout was that? it tore the sky.

*Chorus.* Doubtless the people shouting to behold  
Their once great dread, captive and blind before  
them. 1474

Or at some proof of strength before them shown.

*Manoa.* His ransom, if my whole inheritance  
May compass it, shall willingly be paid  
And numbered down: much rather I shall choose  
To live the poorest in my tribe, than richest,  
And he in that calamitous prison left. 1480  
No, I am fixed not to part hence without him.

For his redemption all my patrimony,  
 If need be, I am ready to forego  
 And quit: not wanting him, I shall want nothing.

*Chorus.* Fathers are wont to lay' up for their  
 sons; 1485

Thou for thy son art bent to lay out all:  
 Sons wont to nurse their parents in old age;  
 Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy son,  
 Made older than thy age through eye-sight lost.

*Manoa.* It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,  
 And view him sitting in the house, ennobled 1491  
 With all those high exploits by him achieved,  
 And on his shoulders waving down those locks  
 That of a nation armed the strength contained:  
 And I persuade me God had not permitted 1495  
 His strength again to grow up with his hair  
 Garrisoned round about him like a camp  
 Of faithful soldiery, were not his purpose  
 To use him further yet in some great service;  
 Not to sit idle with so great a gift 1500  
 Useless, and thence ridiculous, about him.  
 And since his strength with eye-sight was not  
 lost,

God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.

*Chorus.* Thy hopes are not ill founded, nor seem  
 vain,

Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon 1505  
 Conceived, agreeable to a father's love;  
 In both which we, as next, participate.

*Manoa.* I know your friendly minds, and—O  
 what noise!

Mercy of Heaven! what hideous noise was that?  
Horribly loud, unlike the former shout. 1510

*Chorus.* Noise call you it, or universal groan,  
As if the whole inhabitation perished!  
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that  
noise,

Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

*Manoa.* Of ruin indeed methought I heard the  
noise. 1515

Oh! it continues; they have slain my son.

*Chorus.* Thy son is rather slaying them: that  
outcry

From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

*Manoa.* Some dismal accident it needs must be.  
What shall we do; stay here, or run and see? 1520

*Chorus.* Best keep together here, lest, running  
thither,

We unawares run into danger's mouth.

This evil on the Philistines is fallen:

From whom could else a general cry be heard?

The sufferers, then, will scarce molest us here; 1525

From other hands we need not much to fear.

What if his eye-sight (for to Israel's God

Nothing is hard) by miracle restored,

He now be dealing dole among his foes,

And over heaps of slaughtered walk his way? 1530

*Manoa.* That were a joy presumptuous to be  
thought.

*Chorus.* Yet God hath wrought things as in-  
credible

For his people of old; what hinders now?

*Manoa.* He can, I know, but doubt to think he will;

Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief. 1535

A little stay will bring some notice hither.

*Chorus.* Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner,

For evil news rides post, while good news baits.

And to our wish I see one hither speeding,  
An Ebrew, as I guess, and of our tribe. 1540

*Messenger.* Oh, whither shall I run, or which way fly

The sight of this so horrid spectacle,  
Which erst my eyes beheld, and yet behold?

For dire imagination still pursues me.

But providence or instinct of nature seems, 1545  
Or reason, though disturbed and scarce consulted,

To have guided me aright, I know not how,  
To thee first, reverend Manoa, and to these  
My countrymen, whom here I knew remaining,  
As at some distance from the place of horror, 1550  
So in the sad event too much concerned.

*Manoa.* The accident was loud, and here before thee

With rueful cry; yet what it was we hear not:  
No preface needs; thou seest we long to know.

*Messenger.* It would burst forth, but I recover breath, 1555

And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

*Manoa.* Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

*Messenger.* Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are  
fallen,  
All in a moment overwhelmed and fallen.

*Manoa.* Sad! but thou know'st to Israelites not  
saddest 1560

The desolation of a hostile city.

*Messenger.* Feed on that first; there may in grief  
be surfeit.

*Manoa.* Relate by whom.

*Messenger.* By Samson.

*Manoa.* That still lessens  
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

*Messenger.* Ah! Manoa, I refrain too suddenly  
To utter what will come at last too soon; 1566  
Lest evil tidings, with too rude irruption  
Hitting thy aged ear, should pierce too deep.

*Manoa.* Suspense in news is torture; speak them  
out.

*Messenger.* Then take the worst in brief: Sam-  
son is dead. 1570

*Manoa.* The worst indeed! O, all my hope's de-  
feated  
To free him hence! but death, who sets all free,  
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.  
What windy joy this day had I conceived,  
Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves 1575  
Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring  
Nipt with the lagging rear of winter's frost!  
Yet ere I give the reins to grief, say first  
How died he? death to life is crown or shame.  
All by him fell, thou say'st; by whom fell he? 1580

What glorious hand gave Samson his death's  
wound?

*Messenger.* Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

*Manoa.* Wearied with slaughter then, or how?  
explain.

*Messenger.* By his own hands.

*Manoa.* Self-violence? what cause  
Brought him so soon at variance with himself 1585  
Among his foes?

*Messenger.* Inevitable cause,  
At once both to destroy and be destroyed:  
The edifice, where all were met to see him,  
Upon their heads and on his own he pulled.

*Manoa.* O lastly over-strong against thyself!  
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge. 1591  
More than enough we know; but while things yet  
Are in confusion, give us, if thou canst,  
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,  
Relation more particular and distinct. 1595

*Messenger.* Occasions drew me early to this city;  
And as the gates I entered with sun-rise,  
The morning trumpets festival proclaimed  
Through each high street. Little I had dispatched,  
When all abroad was rumoured that this day 1600  
Samson should be brought forth, to show the people  
Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games;  
I sorrowed at his captive state, but minded  
Not to be absent at that spectacle.  
The building was a spacious theatre, 1605  
Half-round, on two main pillars vaulted high,  
With seats where all the lords, and each degree

Of sort, might sit in order to behold ;  
The other side was open, where the throng  
On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand :  
I among these aloof obscurely stood. 1611  
The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice  
Had filled their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and  
wine,

When to their sports they turned. Immediately  
Was Samson as a public servant brought, 1615  
In their state livery clad : before him pipes  
And timbrels ; on each side went armèd guards ;  
Both horse and foot before him and behind,  
Archers, and slingers, cataphracts, and spears.

At sight of him the people with a shout 1620  
Rifted the air ; clamouring their god with praise,  
Who had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.  
He patient, but undaunted, where they led him,  
Came to the place ; and what was set before him,  
Which without help of eye might be assayed, 1625  
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still performed  
All with incredible, stupendious force,  
None daring to appear antagonist.

At length, for intermission sake, they led him  
Between the pillars ; he his guide requested 1630  
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard),  
As over-tired, to let him lean a while  
With both his arms on those two massy pillars,  
That to the archèd roof gave main support.  
He unsuspecting led him ; which when Samson  
Felt in his arms, with head a while inclined, 1636  
And eyes fast fixed, he stood, as one who prayed,

Or some great matter in his mind revolved.  
At last, with head erect, thus cried aloud :  
' Hitherto, lords, what your commands imposed  
I have performed, as reason was, obeying, 1641  
Not without wonder or delight beheld :  
Now, of my own accord, such other trial  
I mean to show you of my strength yet greater,  
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.' 1645  
This uttered, straining all his nerves, he bowed ;  
As with the force of winds and waters pent,  
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars  
With horrible convulsion to and fro 1649  
He tugged, he shook, till down they came, and drew  
The whole roof after them with burst of thunder  
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,  
Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,  
Their choice nobility and flower, not only  
Of this, but each Philistian city round, 1655  
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.  
Samson, with these immixed, inevitably  
Pulled down the same destruction on himself ;  
The vulgar only scaped, who stood without.

*Chorus.* O dearly bought revenge, yet glorious !  
Living or dying thou hast fulfilled 1661  
The work for which thou wast foretold  
To Israel, and now liest victorious  
Among thy slain self-killed ;  
Not willingly, but tangled in the fold 1665  
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoined  
Thee with thy slaughtered foes, in number more  
Than all thy life had slain before.



*1 Semichorus.* While their hearts were jocund  
 and sublime,  
 Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine, 1670  
 And fat regorged of bulls and goats,  
 Chaunting their idol, and preferring  
 Before our living Dread, who dwells  
 In Silo, his bright sanctuary;  
 Among them he a spirit of phrenzy sent, 1675  
 Who hurt their minds,  
 And urged them on with mad desire  
 To call in haste for their destroyer:  
 They, only set on sport and play,  
 Unweetingly importuned 1680  
 Their own destruction to come speedy upon them.  
 So fond are mortal men,  
 Fallen into wrath divine,  
 As their own ruin on themselves to invite,  
 Insensate left, or to sense reprobate, 1685  
 And with blindness internal struck.

*2 Semichorus.* But he, though blind of sight,  
 Despised, and thought extinguished quite,  
 With inward eyes illuminated,  
 His fiery virtue roused 1690  
 From under ashes into sudden flame,  
 And, as an evening dragon, came,  
 Assailant on the perched roosts  
 And nests in order ranged  
 Of tame villatic fowl; but, as an eagle, 1695  
 His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads.  
 So Virtue, given for lost,  
 Depressed and overthrown, as seemed,

Like that self-begotten bird  
 In the Arabian woods embost, 1700  
 That no second knows nor third,  
 And lay erewhile a holocaust,  
 From out her ashy womb now teemed,  
 Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most  
 When most unactive deemed ; 1705  
 And though her body die, her fame survives,  
 A secular bird, ages of lives.

*Manoa.* Come, come; no time for lamentation  
 now,  
 Nor much more cause: Samson hath quit himself  
 Like Samson, and heroicy hath finished 1710  
 A life heroic, on his enemies  
 Fully revenged; hath left them years of mourning,  
 And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor  
 Through all Philistian bounds; to Israel  
 Honour hath left and freedom, let but them 1715  
 Find courage to lay hold on this occasion;  
 To himself and father's house eternal fame;  
 And, which is best and happiest yet, all this  
 With God not parted from him, as was feared,  
 But favouring and assisting to the end. 1720  
 Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
 Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,  
 Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair,  
 And what may quiet us in a death so noble.  
 Let us go find the body where it lies 1725  
 Soaked in his enemies' blood, and from the stream  
 With lavers pure, and cleansing herbs wash off  
 The clotted gore. I, with what speed the while

(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay),  
 Will send for all my kindred, all my friends, 1730  
 To fetch him hence, and solemnly attend,  
 With silent obsequy and funeral train,  
 Home to his father's house. There will I build  
 him

A monument, and plant it round with shade  
 Of laurel ever green, and branching palm, 1735  
 With all his trophies hung, and acts enrolled  
 In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.  
 Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,  
 And from his memory inflame their breasts  
 To matchless valour and adventures high; 1740  
 The virgins also shall, on feastful days,  
 Visit his tomb with flowers, only bewailing  
 His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,  
 From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

*Chorus.* All is best, though we oft doubt 1745  
 What the unsearchable dispose  
 Of highest Wisdom brings about,  
 And ever best found in the close.  
 Oft he seems to hide his face,  
 But unexpectedly returns; 1750  
 And to his faithful champion hath in place  
 Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns,  
 And all that band them to resist  
 His uncontrollable intent.  
 His servants he, with new acquist 1755  
 Of true experience from this great event,  
 With peace and consolation hath dismissed,  
 And calm of mind, all passion spent.

## NOTES

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### PSALM CXIV. 1624.

This and the following paraphrase are interesting chiefly because they are the work of the boy Milton. They show the good workmanship of the young versifier,—good rhetoric rather than good poetry; his natural leaning toward scriptural subjects; and something of his tastes in reading. The influence of Sylvester, the translator of Du Bartas, seems to have been noticed by all the commentators since Mr. Charles Dunster called attention to it in 1800. (*Considerations on Milton's Early Reading*. Referred to by Todd, 1801; Masson, 1890.) Du Bartas (1544-1590) was a French poet, whose *Semaine ou Création du Monde* was extremely popular. It was translated into English, under the title of *Divine Weekes and Workes*, by Josuah Sylvester (1563-1618). Milton must have come in contact with this translation, and was doubtless influenced by it. Here is the beginning of the poem, which dealt with the scriptural account of the creation:—

‘ Thou glorious Guide of Heav’ns star-glistring motion,  
Thou, thou (true *Neptune*) Tamer of the *Ocean*,  
Thou Earth’s dread Shaker (at whose only Word,  
Th’ *Edlian* Scouts are quickly still’d and stirr’d)  
Lift up my Soule, my drowsie Spirits refine:  
With learned Art enrich this Work of mine.  
O Father, grant I sweetly warble forth  
Unto our seed the WORLD’S renowned BIRTH:  
Grant (gratious God) that I record in Verse  
The rarest Beauties of this UNIVERSE:

And grant, therein Thy power I may discern;  
That, teaching others, I my selfe may learne.'

—Quoted from Edition of 1641.

Spenser's influence over Milton at this time has been mentioned by commentators, who have not, however, given very convincing evidence from these paraphrases. The influence of Sylvester seems paramount.

1. **Terah's.** *Gen. xi. 24-32.*

3. **Pharian.** Egyptian. Derivation not certain: there is an island in the Bay of Alexandria called Pharos.

6. A not infrequent construction: plural subject and singular verb. But the two subjects may be thought of as one thing (in our immediate time Kipling writes, 'The tumult and the shouting dies'—*Recessional*). In some dialects the *s* (our sign of the singular) was a plural ending. The student must be careful not to regard as 'bad grammar' constructions with which he is not familiar. Good grammar is merely good custom recorded; and good customs may change. *Cf. Lycidas* 7, note, p. 252.

7. **That.** Object of saw.

9. Note the change of tense.

PSALM CXXXVI. 1624.

5. **blaze.** Blazon. *Cf. Arcades* 74.

10. **That.** The 1673 edition here reads 'Who,' as also in l. 13, 17, 21, 25. 'That' is the reading of 1645. 'Who' is undoubtedly the better word, but as the main reason for printing these paraphrases is to show the work of the youthful poet, it seems best to retain the earlier reading.

46. **Erythræan main.** The Red Sea. *ἐρυθρός* is the Greek word for 'red.'

65. **Seon.** *Cf. Numbers* xxi. 21-25.

66. **Amorrean.** This adjective for the coast of the Amorites seems, as Todd suggests, to indicate that Milton had Buchanan's Latin translation of the Psalms before him. Buchanan uses *Amorrhæum* and *Amorrhæis* (as well as

*Pharius* for 'Egyptian,' for which *cf.* l. 3 of the preceding paraphrase). The 'coast' was the east coast of the Dead Sea.

69. Og. *Cf. Numbers xxi. 33-35.*

ON THE DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT. 1626 (or at the close of 1625).

The fair infant was the niece of Milton, the daughter of his elder sister, Anne Milton [Phillips]. The child was but a few months old. It was the brother of this child, Edward Phillips (1630-1696?), whose memoir of his uncle is so important to students of Milton. According to Milton's usage, '*anno ætatis 17*' means 'at seventeen years of age,' not 'in his seventeenth year.' The expression is placed above the title in the edition of 1673, not beneath the title; probably, as Masson suggests, to prevent anyone from reading in one glance: 'a fair infant dying of a cough *anno ætatis 17*!'

1. *Cf. Shakespeare's Passionate Pilgrim x.*
2. **timelessly.** untimely (adv.).
5. **amorous on.** Shakespeare uses both 'amorous on' and 'amorous of': 'amorous on Hero,' (*Much Ado* II. i. 162); 'amorous of their strokes' (*Antony and Cleopatra* II. ii. 202).
8. **Aquilo.** Boreas; the north wind.  
his. Winter's.
- 9 **Athenian damsel.** Orithyia, daughter of the Athenian king, Erechtheus, was carried off by Boreas.
10. **He.** Winter.  
touched his deity full near. Nearly impugned his divinity, or came 'home' to his godship.
12. **infamous.** Probably had the accent on second syllable. Spencer (*F. Q.* III. vi. 13) used the same expression with same accent; Shakespeare accents the ante-

penult (I. *Henry VI.* IV. i, 30; *Antony and Cleopatra* IV. ix. 19) in the two cases in which he uses the word.

16. **middle empire.** 'The middle air lay beneath the æther, which Homer describes as extending over the abode of the gods' (Browne); or merely 'between heaven and earth' (Keightley). See Century Dictionary: ether. Verity in a note on *P. L.* i. 516, refers to a mediæval theory indicating the division of the air into three regions, or strata, the middle one of which was the place of clouds and vapors, and was very cold.

25. **Hyacinth.** A beautiful youth, whom Apollo accidentally killed at quoits. From his blood grew the 'purple flower' that we call hyacinth.

**Eurotas.** The principal river of Sparta.

28. Note that **so** is here an emphatic word.

31. **wormy bed.** A Shakespearean expression: *Midsummer Night's Dream* III. ii. 384 (Warton).

32. **low.** In the sense of deep.

33. **for pity.** Could Heaven, in all pity, doom thee? **doom.** In the earlier sense, judge.

34. In answer, not to the question of the preceding line, but to the suppositions of lines 29-32.

36. **resolve me.** As frequently in Shakespeare, 'inform me.'

'What, master, read you? first resolve me that' (*Taming of the Shrew* IV. ii. 7).

39. **high first-moving sphere.** The *primum mobile*, for which, consult the dictionary; also the note on *Vac. Ex.* 34, p. 183.

44. **Shaked.** Also used by Shakespeare, *e. g.*, *Cymbeline* I. v. 76.

47. **Earth's sons.** The Titans. It was another race, the Giants, that besieged Olympus; but it is not necessary, as some commentators have done (Browne, Rolfe), to

charge Milton with an error in scholarship; the poet merely asks, Did the Titans, *of late*, besiege? etc.

48. **sheeny.** bright and shining.

thou some goddess fled. 'Fled' may be a participle, in which case supply 'wert' after 'thou'; or it may be a preterite, in which case supply 'as' before 'some.'

50. **that just maid.** Astræa lived on the earth in the golden age. She was the goddess of innocence, and returned to heaven when the world become corrupt.

53. [**Mercy,**] This word was suggested by John Heskin, in 1750, to fill the obvious lacuna (Warton). It has been generally adopted.

55. **heavenly brood.** The virtues.

57. **golden-winged host.** The angels.

58. **human weed.** The garment of flesh, not the garments of people.

59. **prefixed.** That which has been fixed upon before.

60. **abode.** Time (not place) of abiding.

68. The 'plague was afflicting London at this time.

69. **smart.** 'Keen pain,' as used by Shakespeare, *l. g.*, *Troilus and Cressida* IV. iv. 20.

## AT A VACATION EXERCISE. 1628.

A good deal of explanation is needed to make this poem intelligible, and it was probably not really appreciated until Professor Masson made clear the character of the occasion at which the poem was read. In brief, after the close of the Easter term most of the students of the University met, as was customary, to hold some high festival, part serious, perhaps, part prank. Milton was chosen 'Father,' with duties like those of a chairman or toast-master; duties that he elaborately, if not laboriously, performed. He began with a Latin address, more than half seriously justifying the occasion, on the subject: 'Exer-



citationes nonnunquam ludicras Philosophiæ studiis non obesse' (Exercises of a playful nature now and then are not inconsistent with philosophical study—a stately way of saying that all study and no play makes Jack a dull boy). When he had established this thesis to his satisfaction, he went on (still in Latin) to make practical application of his theory by good-humoredly cracking jokes and poking fun at his fellow-students, and finally, drawing near the end of his time, he announced his intention of breaking the rules in order to speak in English (for Latin was the language required in public university speaking). The English speech follows, part verse (the poem before us) and part prose (now lost). It was, it seems, customary for the 'Father' to bestow burlesque names upon some of his fellow-students,—his 'sons,'—and Milton, instead of naming the 'sons' after articles of food or the like, names them after the Predicaments. But before he does this he sings in praise of the language he is using, and then at last, after, say, an hour and a half (Masson's estimate) of speechifying, he resumes his seat, presumably, although 'the rest' that is lost may have taken some time more. As to the Predicaments: according to Aristotle, one cannot conceive of Being (Ens) except under certain definite heads; all that may be thought or said (predicated) of Being falling ultimately under one of these heads or Predicaments. Thus a thing has Substance and Accidents, the latter being subdivided into Quantity, Quality, Relation, Action, Passion, Place, Time, Posture, Habit. These nine canons, with Substance (which is not divided), make up the ten Predicaments or Categories. Milton, as Father, was Ens; 'Substance with his Canons' were ten of the students. The address of Ens to Substance is an extended play of words upon the relationship of Substance to the Accidents.

4. *infant*. Probably used with some thought of the implied pun in the word: in-fans, not speaking.

8. **latter task.** The conclusion of his speech.

12. **thither.** In the Latin part of his speech.

19-20. There is no specific reason for referring this to the carefully constructed, artificial sentences of Lyly's *Euphues*, as some commentators have done. Browne with more plausibility suggests some local allusion of the sort that Milton made in one of his Latin college essays. Masson (*Life* I. 276) thus translates: . . . 'numberless hundreds of those unskilled ones in whom there is no mind, no right reason, no sound judgment, but only pride in a certain overboiling and truly laughable foam of words; from whom, if you strip the rags they have borrowed from new-fangled authors, then immortal God! how much barer than my nail you would behold them.' . . .

20. **takes.** See note on *Psalm cxiv.* 6, p 178.

**fantastics.** Shakespeare speaks of 'lispings affected fantasticoes' (*Romeo and Juliet* II. iv. 30, 1st Quarto), 'To be fantastic may become a youth' (*Two Gentlemen of Verona* II. vii. 47).

22. **spirits** has a monosyllabic value here, as so frequently at this period. Cf. *sprite*.

23. The whole figure of naked thoughts choosing a garb of words is not to be taken very seriously as a description of the poetic process. To poets as to others thoughts occur garbed. But Milton is playing upon a fancy, not describing psychologically his habit of utterance.

29. This is a foretaste of the sterner Milton. Doubtless he would have preferred greatly the 'graver subject'; and his preference was a true instinct. He shines but dimly in facetious verse. Almost immediately Milton gives his thought wing, and he rises to a strain that is, to say the very least, remarkable in a boy of nineteen. One thinks irresistibly of the *Paradise Lost*, that was to come more than half a lifetime later.

33. **Such where.** Subjects wherein.

34. Milton's conception of the Universe was Ptolemaic,

Around about the earth were spheres, one for each of the seven known planets (including the sun and moon), one for the fixed stars, a crystal sphere, and the *primum mobile*—an enclosing sphere which moved the others.

**Wheeling poles.** The spheres themselves (Keightley).

**Heaven's door.** The opening at the top of the system of spheres; through which Heaven was visible. *Cf. P. L.* vii. 560-581; iii. 481-485, 498-509, 526-528, and 537-543.

35. **Each blissful deity.** The mingling of the mythology of Greece with the things that were held in real belief is to be found not infrequently in Milton. The mixture of sacred and profane is usually in our day counted incongruous and more or less offensive; but Milton does not stand alone in peopling a Christian heaven with mythological deities. *Cf. Lycidas* 82, note, p. 256.

36. **How he.** How each deity.

**thunderous.** Thunderer's was long ago suggested. There is no reason to change.

37. **unshorn.** Horace, and Pindar before him, called Apollo 'unshorn.'

40. **Spheres of watchful fire.** *Cf.* note on l. 34. The word 'watchful' may be an allusion to the Fates in the Platonic vision, who assisted the movement of the spheres and watched over life. *Cf.* note on *Arcades* 63, p. 222.

42. **hills of snow.** Snow-white clouds, or snow-covered hills.

**lofts.** Milton's sole use of the word. The plural perhaps prevents us from taking the word in the sense of sky (the earlier meaning). *Cf.* aloft. 'The space beneath the roof' seems to lack vividness here.

**piled thunder.** Thunder clouds, if the first meaning of 'hills of snow' is taken; or thunderbolts, as Browne suggests.

43. **at length.** Finally.

**green-eyed.** Another classic epithet; with no thought of jealousy (for which see *Othello* III, iii. 166).

46. **beldam.** Cf. Dictionary.

48. **Demodocus.** Cf. *Odyssey* viii. 43-45, 62-95, 254-369, 471-541. The blind bard of the Phæacian king, Alcinous. A strange forecast of Milton's own fate: the muse 'Took from him sight, but gave him strains divine' (*Odyssey* viii. 64). Demodocus sang, at Alcinous' feast, of the strife of Ulysses with Achilles, and Ulysses wept as he listened. Then Demodocus sang of the love of Ares and Aphrodite and the net of Hephaistos; then again of the Trojan war and the fall of Troy; and again Ulysses wept, but only Alcinous saw his tears.

56. To keep within the limits of the Category or Predicament. Milton here speaks to his Muse, as if to himself in his assumed character of Ens.

59. **Son.** Substance. Throughout this speech the reader must keep in mind Aristotle's notion of relation of Substance to the other Predicaments (the nine Accidents). Substance is Being *per se*; it underlies all appearances, yet cannot be apprehended save through its external manifestation in the Accidents. In other words, Substance is subject to all the other Predicaments, the Accidents, and at the same time is the source of their very existence. It is on this idea that Milton plays so dexterously.

60. **fairy ladies.** Fairies.

66. **invisible.** Because substance cannot be seen.

71. **prospective-glass.** Spenser (*F. Q.* iii. 2, 18-20) describes a glass (mirror) in which the future might be seen. This glass of Merlin's devising was 'round and hollow,' however. In his essay, 'Of Seeming Wise,' Bacon refers to 'prospectives,' perhaps in the sense of 'perspective glasses.'

83-88. Nothing can be antagonistic to substance itself; but the properties of substance (Action and Passion or Passivity, for example) may be in opposition.

90. **your learned hands.** The hands of his learned

hearers (M.). **Relation** was called by his name. The following passage puzzled the critics until 1859, the connection between 'Rivers' and 'Relation' being utterly unintelligible. It is rather amusing, however, to find that the commentators instead of frankly giving it up, merely followed Warton in saying 'It is hard to say, in what sense, or in what manner, this introduction of the rivers was to be applied to the subject.' Finally Mr. W. G. Clark (the Shakespearean scholar) guessed that Milton meant precisely what he said: Relation was called by his name, Rivers. The records of Christ's College show that two students named Rivers were enrolled in 1628. Milton's joke is on the critics, too.

92-100. 'In this passage Milton must have had in view Spenser's poetical enumerations of rivers (see especially *F. Q.* IV. xi. 20 *et seq.*), but may have been indebted also to Drayton's *Polyolbion*. "Utmost Tweed" is plain [the northern boundary of England]; the Ouse and the Don are in Yorkshire; Drayton speaks of the "thirty streams" of the Trent [Fr. *trente*]; the Mole, in Surrey, disappears in summer, for a part of its course, into a subterranean channel; Severn derived its name in the legends from the maiden Sabra or Sabrina drowned in it [*Comus* 824] . . . ; there are several Avons, but the one meant may be the Avon of Bristol [on account of the cliffs which rise above it.—Keightley]; "sedgy Lea" is near London; the Dee, near Chester, was sacred with Druidical tradition [*Lycidas*, 55]; Humber in the legend derives its name from a Hunnish invader of primeval times.'—Masson.

100. **royal-towered.** Windsor castle, the tower of London, and the palace of Greenwich are on the banks of the Thames (K.).

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY. 1629.

5. **holy sages.** The Old Testament prophets.
6. **forfeit.** The penalty of human sin.
10. **wont.** Old preterite : we now use only the participle in 'was wont.'
11. **the midst.** The middle one. Is Milton thinking of the familiar order of the words, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?
23. **wizards.** Wise men. *Matt.* ii, 1-2.
24. **prevent.** Anticipate. Many seemingly familiar words should be looked up in the dictionary; an earlier meaning frequently gives the necessary interpretation. Such words as 'sovrán' (l. 60), 'vein' (l. 15), 'doff,' (l. 33) and 'quaint' (l. 194) are examples of another class of words that repay research.
27. **angel quire.** *Luke* ii, 13.
28. *Cf. Isaiah* vi. 6, 7 (Newton).
34. **so.** Thereby, thus.
37. **Only.** Almost in the sense of 'however.' Although she does not wanton with the sun, yet (and this is all) she woos the air with fair speeches, to hide, etc. Or, it may mean, With fair speeches only, she woos, etc.
41. **Pollute.** Past participles without the *d* are not uncommon in Shakespeare. 'Of nothing first create.' *R. and J.* I. i. 183. We have an occasional use to-day of 'situate.'
45. **to cease.** To make to cease, used causatively.
47. **sliding.** Coleridge and Tennyson, following Milton's example, have also made poetical use of this seemingly not very poetic word.

'She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,  
That slid into my soul.'—*Ancient Mariner.*

'As down dark tides the glory slides  
And star-like mingles with the stars.'—*Sir Galahad.*

48. **the turning sphere.** All the spheres referred to in note on *Vac. Ex.* l. 34, p. 183.

50. **turtle.** *Cf.* note on l. 24.

52. **peace.** The same stanza contains a literal and a figurative use of the word.

56. **hooked.** The scythe-like projections on the wheels are here referred to.

59. *Cf.* note on l. 24.

64. **whist.** Shakespeare has the same rhyme and the same meaning in the *The Tempest* I. ii. 378 (Ariel's song):

‘Curtstied when you have and kissed  
The wild waves whist.’

66. **ocean.** Trisyllabic.

68. **birds of calm.** Kingfishers (halcyons). Halcyon days are the fourteen days of calm at the time of the winter solstice, when the kingfishers build their nests.

71. **one way.** Toward the infant Deity (Keightley).  
**influence.** An astrological term, referring to the power of the stars over earthly things.

73. **For all.** We still use this idiom.

74. **Lucifer.** The morning star.

81. **as.** As if.

85. **lawn.** *Cf.* note on l. 24.

86. **or ere.** Or and ere mean the same thing, ‘before.’ The duplicated form is idiomatic.

87. *Cf.* note on l. 24.

88. **than.** An old form of ‘then.’

89. **the mighty Pan.** Pan was the god of shepherds, and Christ as the Good Shepherd could be thought of as the mighty Pan,—mighty as opposed to powerless. Perhaps the suggestion of ‘all’ in the Greek word helped to make the allusion weightier. Spenser used the term ‘great Pan’ with reference to Christ (*Shep. Cal. July*, 49).

92. **silly.** Look up in Dictionary.

93. **when.** Almost in the sense of 'then.' If taken in our meaning, the conclusion of the thought (l. 99-100) seems hardly adequate. But perhaps this is the conclusion of the preceding stanza, which in that event should end with a comma.

95. **strook.** Milton's usage seems divided between strook and struck.

97. **noise.** Music; as in *Sol. Mus.* 18. In a fragment of a liturgical play of the fifteenth century the singing of angels is spoken of as a 'nobulle noyes.' Shakespeare occasionally uses the word in the sense of 'music' (*e. g.*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV. iii. 12), and once in the sense of 'a band of musicians' (*II. Henry IV.* II. iv. 13). In *Comus* 369, 'noise' means 'sound.'

98. **as . . . took.** Such as to take.

102. **hollow round of Cynthia's seat.** The sphere in which the moon was fixed. The construction here is clear when looked at carefully,

104. **won.** Won over.

106. **its.** 'One of the three instances in all Milton's poetry of the use of the word *its*' (Masson). The other two places are *P. L.* i. 254, and iv. 813.

107. Not, 'only such harmony'; but 'such harmony of itself.' What difference in thought?

108. **union.** Trisyllabic. Similar instances will not be noted again.

109. **their.** The shepherds'.

116. **unexpressive.** Inexpressible.

119-124. *Cf. Job xxxviii. 4-11.*

122. **world,** in Milton, usually means more than earth, although earth would serve as synonym in l. 54. Here it probably means earth, following *Job xxxviii. 4.*

125. An allusion to Pythagoras' notion of the 'music of the spheres'; that is, the spheres of the stellar system, whose motion made a music inaudible to men. *Cf. l. 127.*

126. **once.** For once.



131. **ninefold.** There were eight spheres in Ptolemy's scheme; a ninth and a tenth were added successively. Here Milton seems to restrict the number to nine. *Cf. Vac. Ex.* 35. In *P. L.* iii. 481-4, Milton refers to ten spheres.

132. **consort.** *Cf. Sol. Mus.* 27.

135. **age of gold.** The fabled first age of innocence and peace, which was some day to come again, bringing back with it Astræa. *Cf. Fair Infant*, 50-53, and note on 50, p. 181.

143-144. These lines read in the 1645 edition:

'Th' enameld Arras of the Rainbow wearing,  
And Mercy set between,'—

146. **tissued.** Milton uses 'tissue' only once more in his poetry, *P. L.* v. 592, referring there to the glittering fabric of banners. Here it may mean the thin texture of the clouds, or perhaps their coloring.

155. **ychained.** The prefix *y* comes from the Anglo-Saxon *ge-*, the prefix of the past participle.

156. **deep.** The depths of air (Keightley). *Cf. Thessal.* iv. 16-17.

157. *Cf. Exodus* ix. 16-19.

166. **is.** Will be.

167. **but now begins.** But is beginning now.

168. *Cf. Rev.* xx. 2.

172. **swinges.** Lashes.

173. These stanzas (xix-xxv) develop the tradition that at the birth of Christ the heathen deities fled from the earth, and the oracles ceased to speak. In stanza xx there seems to be the recollection of the old story that at the time of the death of Christ the cry was heard by a pilot on shipboard that Great Pan was dead, and such effects followed as Milton has here described. It is to be noted, however, that these stanzas are in the ode that

celebrates the birth, not the death, of Christ; and that therefore if Milton was thinking of the death of Pan, he must have had the shepherd god himself in mind. In any event, the conception of the heathen god dying when Christ was born, thereby permitting the words 'Pan is dead' to be taken literally, is far more poetical (because more concrete and imaginative) than the conception which makes Pan a mere figure of speech. But as Milton has already referred to Christ as the Mighty Pan, we may suppose that he had in mind only the background and incidental points of the legend.

175. **words deceiving.** The responses of the oracles were often ambiguous or obscure.

180. **cell.** The cell (*cella*) of a temple was the place where the image of the god was kept.

181-3. What is the construction?

183. *Cf. Jeremiah xxxi. 15, and Matthew ii. 18 (Warton).*

186. **genius.** *Cf. Dictionary.*

191. **Lars.** Spirits of dead ancestors, which were worshipped as household gods.

**Lemurs.** Ghosts who required annual propitiation.

194. **flamens.** Priests.

195. **chill marble.** Statues. The allusion is to 'a usual prodigy' among the ancients (Keightley).

197-228. The student should read the passage (l. 381-521) in the first book of *Paradise Lost*, in which some of the deities here referred to are spoken of at length.

197. **Peor and Baalim.** *Cf. P. L. i. 422.* Baalim, a term (plural) for Phœnician deities. *Numbers xxv. 3.* refers to Baal-Peor, one of these gods (Browne).

199. 1 *Samuel v. 3-4* tells of the twice battering of Dagon.

200. **Ashtaroth.** Astarte, a Phœnician goddess corresponding to Aphrodite. In *P. L. i. 438*, she is called Astoreth, Ashtaroth being used as a feminine plural (*P. L. i. 422*).

203. **Hammon.** Ammon, an Egyptian god, having the horns of a ram or goat.

204. **Thammuz.** A Syrian god having some of the attributes of Adonis. *Cf. P. L. i. 446.*

205. **Moloch.** *Cf. P. L. i. 392.*

'Sandys in his *Travels*, a book popular in Milton's time, says of the valley of Tophet: "Therein the Hebrews sacrificed their children to *Moloch*, an idol of brass, having the head of the calf, the rest of a kingly figure with arms extended to receive the miserable sacrifice seared to death with his burning embracements. For the idol was hollow within, and filled with fire; and lest their lamentable shrieks should sad the hearts of their parents, the priests of Moloch did deaf their ears with the continual clang of trumpets and timbrels"' (Browne).

212. **Isis**, wife of **Osiris**, the god of the Nile. **Orus** was their son. **Anubis** was a god in the form of a dog, **Apis** a god in bull form. Milton ascribes to Osiris the form of Apis.

217. Osiris was induced by his hostile brother, Typhon, to enter a chest, and was thereby caught and put to death.

228. Almost certainly a reference to the story of the infant Hercules, who in his cradle strangled two serpents. This especially is the sort of thing that no religious poet of to-day would venture upon. The progress of the idea is rather interesting. The brother of Osiris is Set, whose Greek name is Typhon. This suggests the Greek Typhon, of snake-like form. The snake, inferior to the infant, suggests Hercules.

229. The whole stanza seems really to be a comparison, not a continuation of the previous imagery. The false gods flee at the advent of Christ; so troop away spirits when morning comes. 'So' means here 'thus,' not 'accordingly.' Previous editors seemingly take the stanza as a carrying farther of the imagery.

234. **fettered.** Probably in the sense of impelled by necessity.

236. **night-steeds.** Masson (quoting also *P. L.* ii. 662) takes them to be nightmares, in opposition to Warton who accounts them to be 'the steeds of Night,' Rolfe aptly quotes *Comus* 553. 'Steeds of Night' is the simpler meaning.

240. **teemed.** Born. The star is, of course, the star of Bethlehem.

241. **fixed.** Note the exact force of the word.

244. **harnessed.** Armored.

## UPON THE CIRCUMCISION.

The dates of the poems *On Time*, *Upon the Circumcision*, and *At a Solemn Music*, are in doubt. In the editions of 1645 and 1673 the poems follow *The Passion* in the order just named. In the Cambridge MS. they follow *Arcades* in this order—*Solemn Music*, *Time*, *Circumcision*,—two drafts of a prose letter intervening between the final draft of *Solemn Music* and *Time*. Because of their position in the Cambridge MS., Masson in his latest edition of Milton (1890) prints the poems after *Arcades*, in the MS. order, and conjectures that their date is therefore 1633 or perhaps 1634. Masson makes the point that because they follow *Arcades* in the MS. they must have been composed subsequently to it, and *Arcades* he places near *Comus* (1634) in time (say 1633 or early in 1634), because of its 'intimate connexion' with the greater mask. The reason urged for the late date (for the *Circumcision* poem is usually assigned to January, 1630, and the other two poems are placed somewhere between 1630 and 1632) does not seem to the present editor to be entirely conclusive, as it assumes the chronological order of the MS. pages, which were not bound together until 1736, and also assumes that the pages were written upon in regular order, whereas some of the intermediate pages of the MS.

are still blank. The MSS. of the *Time* and *Circumcision* poems seem to be transcripts and not first drafts. It is a temptation, therefore, to regard these poems as earlier in composition than the MS. indicates; but the handwriting so closely resembles that of the final draft of the *Solemn Music* (which is preceded by the erased drafts) that an effort to show that the *Time* and the *Circumcision* might be of earlier date than the *Solemn Music*, would be futile. The burden of proof, then, it must be acknowledged, is upon those who hold the earlier dates.

The internal evidence is not positive enough to be of much value. The *Circumcision* has conceits and antitheses that make it seem of early date; its subject relates it to the early poems on the *Nativity* and the *Passion*. The poem on *Time* is freer of artificial rhetoric and in form it resembles the *Solemn Music*; but the maturer tone of these poems, while thus pointing to a date later than the *Circumcision*, nevertheless recalls the tone of parts of the early *Nativity*.

On account of its subject, *Upon the Circumcision* is given its present place in this volume; the other poems are placed next to *Arcades*,—before, not after, in order to keep the masks together.

1. **flaming powers** are seraphim: the word from which 'seraph' is derived means 'to burn.' The 'winged warriors' are cherubim. Cf. *Ezekiel* i. and x.

2. Cf. *Luke* ii. 13.

6. **sad share with us to bear.** To share our sadness.

7-9. A play upon the opposition of fire and water, as shown in the 'fiery essence' and the tears.

10. **Heaven's heraldry.** This has been taken rather too literally by the commentators. It would seem to mean the cherubim and seraphim, already described in stanza xi. of the *Ode on the Nativity*, not a 'troop of heralds,' (Keightley) or 'heraldic pomp' (Masson).

13. **Sore, Sorely.**

15. Which was the greater, the love shown by Christ in assuming human form to save men, or the justice of the law that punished mankind for the sin of Adam? It is difficult to expand this extremely compact yet lucid line and gain in explicitness, even at the expense of compactness.

17. **by rightful doom remediless.** This may mean, 'remediless, by any rightful judgment, *i.e.*, justly without remedy'; or 'remediless, by reason of *the* rightful judgment that had already been pronounced.'

21. **still.** Continually.

24. **excess.** Sin or transgression.

#### THE PASSION.

Probably written in 1630. The beginning of the second stanza indicates that it was written before *The Circumcision*.

4. **divide.** Share; but perhaps, as in Spenser (*F. Q.* iii. i. 40) in a more technical musical sense. Shakespeare uses 'division' in the sense of 'modulation.' (Schmidt.)

11. Keightly refers to *Ps.* xviii. 5.

13. Todd refers to *Heb.* ii. 10.

15. *Cf. Ps.* cxxxiii. 2. Milton's language is full of Biblical quotation and reminiscence.

19. **mask, disguise.** Used perhaps in their dramatic meanings. See Introduction.

22. **scenes.** The imagery here, in the preceding stanza, and in the second line of the poem, has a theatrical sound that may be unintentional. The conventionality of the reference to Phœbus is indicated by the fact that in the line following, Milton uses 'His,' referring to Christ, as if in perfect certainty that the pronoun would not be referred to the preceding masculine noun, Phœbus.

24-25. In antithesis to 22-23.

26. **Cremona's trump.** The *Christiad* of Vida of Cremona (1490-1566). Vida also wrote an *Ars Poetica*.

28. **lute**, viol. 'More apt' than the trumpet.

**still**. Gentle. (Browne.)

29. *Cf. Il Penseroso.*

34-5. Some of the books of elegiac verse at this time had their title-pages black, with white letters. Masson described a book of this kind (by Josuah Sylvester), in which also 'twelve of the succeeding left-hand pages are totally black, save for the royal arms in white.' Todd makes several references to this fanciful mode of indicating woe in print.

37. **the prophet**. Ezekiel. The whole stanza is an allusion to the early chapters of *Ezekiel*.

40. **now**. At the time of the Passion.

43. **sepulchral rock**. The Sepulchre. This stanza, like the fifth, is a rather laborious conceit.

46. **Softened**. Because of his tears. Though grief benumb his hands, yet his tears (being well-instructed) would fall in proper order, scoring on the rock the letters his hands could not trace. The treatment is beneath the years the author had rather than that the subject is above it. But the culmination of bad taste, to venture a dogmatic opinion, is in the last line of the poem—the allusion to Ixion.

51. *Cf. Jeremiah ix. 10.*

#### SONG ON MAY MORNING.

Date uncertain. 1630-1633 probably covers the period in which it was written.

3. **green lap**. Not the verdure of the earth, but the green robe of the flowery maiden, May.

#### ON SHAKESPEAR. 1630.

The date stands in the title, in the edition of 1645. The lines appeared anonymously in the second folio of Shakespeare (1632), under the title: An epitaph on the admirable

dramaticke poet W. Shakespeare. Perhaps this is the first poem that Milton had in print.

1. **What needs.** Why needs (what need is to). Cf. also l. 6.

**Shakespear.** This spelling is retained as Milton's preference. *L'All.* 133 has the same spelling.

4. **ypointing.** A made-up word that succeeds in spite of being made up. In genuine survivals (*e. g.*, 'yclept') the *y* is the prefix of the past, not the present, participle. Milton uses the word in the sense of 'pointing-to' the stars.

10. **easy numbers.** In their preface to the 1623 edition of Shakespeare, Heminge and Condell say:—

'His mind and hand went together: and what he thought, he vttered with that easineffe, that wee haue fcarce receiued from him a blot in his papers.'

and that each heart. And whilst that. 'Whilst' is omitted here, as 'that' is omitted after 'whilst' in l. 9.

11. **unvalued.** Invaluable.

12. **Delphic lines.** As true and profound as the utterance of the oracle.

13. **our fancy of itself bereaving.** Taking away our imagination by the substitution of his far greater imagination, and thereby leaving us as marble,—petrified by his power, in which ours is lost.

Milton makes elaborate use of the idea; and remarkable as the lines undoubtedly are, they have still the sense of a conceit present in them: Shakespeare makes us marble; that marble is his real tomb. One may legitimately question, although no editor seems to have done so, whether 'our wonder and astonishment' and our being made 'marble with too much conceiving,' are truly congruous. But the greatness of intention conquers the ultimate inadequacy of the expression.



## ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER. 1631.

Thomas Hobson, who died 1 January, 1630-1, at the age of 86, made weekly trips between Cambridge and London. Evidently, as the important means of communication between the university and the metropolis, he must have been a marked figure in the university town. His personal peculiarities added, doubtless, to his distinction. Milton avers that the carrier could not endure his enforced idleness, but this can be taken as jestingly as it was uttered. The most famous story of Hobson and his livery stable—whoever wished to hire a horse must take the one nearest the stable door, not his own choice necessarily, but Hobson's choice—is told by Steele in the *Spectator*, No. 509, 14 Oct., 1712. If this story is not apocryphal, it is very strange that Milton made no mention of it. Very few rhymesters, writing in Milton's rhymester vein, would have let pass the opportunity to allude to so capital a story.

5. **'Twas.** He was. Milton uses the words semi-affectionately—as one might pat a dog on the head and say, It's a good old fellow.

7. **For he.** He is ambiguous, but seems to refer to Hobson, not to Death.

8. **Dodged with.** If the previous note be right, 'dodged with' would have our meaning of dodge, evade. If, however, 'he' refers to Death, 'dodged with' would probably mean to follow cautiously (Century Dict.).

**the Bull.** An inn that stood in Bishopsgate Street, London.

10. **his.** Hobson's.

14. **Death, in the kind office.**

**chamberlin.** Keightley remarks that the chamberlain at the inns of those times was waiter, chambermaid, and boots.

ANOTHER OF THE SAME. Probably written shortly after the preceding poem.

5. **sphere-metal.** The metal of which the celestial spheres (see note on *Vac. Ex.* 34, p. 183) were made.

7. **Time numbers motion.** Speed is measured in terms of time, as, so many feet a second; but in Hobson's case his motion put an end to (numbered out) his (life-)time. The entire poem is a string of jokes on the notion that as soon as Hobson stopped his labor, Death caught him.

10. **principles.** His motive power (Rolfe).

12. **breathing.** Stopping to breathe.

14. **term.** Termination. A pun on the academic use of the word,—vacation is followed by the term. Here, prolonging the vacation made the term come all the sooner. But to explain jokes is a more or less ungrateful task.

20. For one carrier there must be six carriers (pall-bearers).

26. **As.** As if. Browne suggests an allusion 'to the "peine forte et dure" by which accused persons refusing to plead, were pressed with heavy weights until they complied or expired. The torture sometimes lasted so long that the victims begged for the mercy of a speedy death by "more weight."' This may perhaps be Milton's meaning.

29. **obedient to the moon.** He made the same number of journeys each month.

32. **his wain was his increase.** Doubtless the best joke in the verses.

One can hardly help feeling in these poems the lapse from good taste. Milton is not, indeed, unkindly, but from a man of his sensitiveness one might expect repression of the jocular instinct when writing of Hobson's death. The difference in station between Milton and Hobson may be made responsible for the flippant tone of the poems; but that very difference would have made

Shelley (for example) shrink from what Milton carelessly relishes. In a word, the poet added nothing to his own nature, or to English literature, when he wrote these poems.

EPITAPH ON THE MARCHIONESS OF WINCHESTER. 1631.

Jane, the wife of the fifth Marquis of Winchester, died in child-bed, 15 April, 1631, aged 23. The immediate cause of her death, according to a news-letter of the time (quoted by Masson), was that she 'had an imposthume upon her cheek lanced; the humour fell down into her throat, and quickly dispatched her.' The great interest that many felt in the sad event is the only thing that has been certainly offered to explain Milton's interest in it.

3. She was 'a daughter of Thomas, Viscount Savage, of Rock-Savage, Cheshire, by his wife, Elizabeth, the eldest daughter and co-heir of Thomas Darcy, Earl of Rivers' (Masson).

12. *her praise.* Praise of her.

17. *virgin-quire.* Bridesmaids.

18. *The god.* Hymen.

22. *cypress-bud.* Symbolic of death.

24. *lovely son.* Charles, sixth Marquis.

26. *Lucina.* The Roman goddess of childbirth.

27. *blame.* In the sense of hostile intention.

28. *Atropos.* Lowell's lines, which are easily remembered, name and distinguish the Fates:

'Spin, spin, Clotho, spin!  
Lachesis, twist! and, Atropos, sever!'

—*Villa Franca.*

32. *yet not.* Masson, followed by some editors of school texts, prints 'not yet,' for which there seems to be neither reason nor authority.

36. *saved.* Which had been saved.

37. the tender slip was, as Keightley puts it, the pride of 'the remaining flowers,' 'which he calls her "carnation train," apparently using "carnation" in the sense of the Latin *purpurens*, *i. e.*, brilliant, glowing.'

50. **seize.** 'In the peculiar legal sense of "to put one in possession of"' (Masson). 2. sub.

55. **Here be tears.** The verses that other poets wrote upon the occasion. There is a tradition, referred to doubtfully by Warton, which these lines (esp. 59) tend to corroborate, that 'there was a Cambridge collection of verses on her death, among which Milton's elegiac ode first appeared.' This volume (if it existed) has not been found.

56. **Helicon.** The mountain of the Muses.

57. **bays.** The bay (laurel) was an emblem of honor.

58. Browne conjectures: 'Fore thy hearse.'

58. **Hearse.** For the several meanings, *Cf.* Dictionary.

59. **Came.** Cam.

63. *Cf. Gen. xxx. xxxv.*

## L'ALLEGRO.

Date uncertain. Masson inclines to place it in the autumn of 1632, just after Milton had gone to Horton; and most editors assign it to the Horton period. Trent argues, with some plausibility, that it might have been written at an earlier date, say 1631. These comments apply also to *Il Penseroso*. 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' may be translated 'the cheerful man' and 'the contemplative man.'

2. **Cerberus.** The three-headed dog that guarded the gateway of the infernal regions. Milton here, as elsewhere, varies mythology to suit himself. It was really Erebus (Darkness) that was the spouse of Night.

3. **Stygian.** Adj. from Styx, one of the rivers of Hades.

10. **Cimmerian.** The Cimmerians lived in perpetual

darkness, beyond the ocean streams. *Cf. Odyssey xi.*  
13-19.

12. **Euphrosyne.** One of the three Graces. The literal translation of the word is 'well-minded' or 'cheerful.'

15. **Two sister Graces.** Aglaia (bright) and Thalia (blooming). The muse of comedy was also named Thalia.

16. **To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore.** This parentage of the Graces is not the familiar one. Zeus and Eurynome are usually given as their parents.

17. **some sager.** *Sc.* poets, or bards. Doubtless a playful reference to himself. The genealogy that follows is, as far as known, Milton's own invention.

25. **Nymph.** Euphrosyne.

27. **Quips and cranks.** Quips are sharp or bright sayings; cranks, 'odd turns' of speech.

28. **Becks.** Beckonings.

29. **Hebe.** Cup-bearer to the gods.

36. **mountain nymph.** It is not at all certain that Milton meant to imply the close kinship between liberty and mountainous regions. On the other hand, Milton is following no authority (this is not unusual with Milton) in making Liberty an oread.

40. **unproved pleasures.** Pleasures that call for no reproof.

41. **To hear the lark.** The construction here may be that of 'to live with her,' etc., in l. 39; *i. e.*, the infinitive, following 'admit.' Preferably, however, it may follow, in sense, l. 40; *i. e.*, one of the 'unproved pleasures' is, 'to hear the lark,' etc. This latter interpretation makes easier the somewhat obscure passage beginning l. 45.

45. **Then to come,** etc. There are several interpretations of this passage. Either the lark or L'Allegro is to come and at the window bid good-morrow: grammatically, either is possible. If the former, 'to come' is in the same construction with 'begin' and 'startle,' 'to' being

there understood but not expressed. If the latter, 'to come' (see previous note) follows 'admit,' or preferably, 'pleasures.' Grammar aside, the passage has been explained as the lark's coming; the man's coming from within, and the man's coming from without, the house. Larks do not thus come to windows, but Milton is not always accurate in his observation. Masson, who rejects the lark, thinks that L'Allegro, 'walking round the country cottage' looks in at the window and bids the family good-morning. The other interpretation (with which the present editor agrees) is that L'Allegro, awakened by the singing of the lark, comes to the window gaily ('in spite of sorrow') and bids good-morrow to the world. The student should reach his own conclusion by weighing the pros and cons of each interpretation.

47. **Sweet-briar and eglantine** are the same. 'Twisted eglantine,' Warton takes to mean 'honeysuckle'; Keightley, 'dog-rose.'

50. **rear of darkness thin.** Retreating darkness, the last thin gloom, has its flight hastened by the martial crowing of the cock.

53. **Oft listening.** The construction changes, but the enumeration of pleasures continues as before.

**hounds and horns.** The shifting of the season here, indicates that Milton is not concerned with any one day or time or even place.

57. **not unseen.** The usual interpretation of this passage—that a cheerful man likes to be seen by other men—seems to make the expression rather far-fetched. Its opposite, in *Il Pens.* 65, is more apt.

60. **state.** An abstract word used for a concrete one. Shakespeare also uses the word in the sense of pomp. Keightley's 'stately progress' loses something of the flavor of the word it explains. Cf. *Il Pens.* 37; *Comus* 35; *Arcades* 14.

67. **tells his tale.** This may mean tells a story, or counts his sheep (tell = count, as telling beads; tale, number). From the romantic telling his tale of love, the less romantic spinning a yarn, and the practical sheep-counting, the student may choose the meaning he thinks most in accord with the spirit of the scene described. There is nothing to fix Milton's own meaning. An editor can only record personal preference, which, in this instance, is for the last meaning.

68. **dale.** The student may be interested in noting the different shades of meaning in 'dell,' 'dale,' 'vale,' 'valley.' Cf. Ruskin, *Deucalion*, Chapter XII. § 3:—

"vale" signifies a large extent of level land, surrounded by hills, or nearly so . . . . The level extent is necessary to the idea; while the next word, "valley," means a large hollow among hills, in which there is little level ground, or none. Next comes "dale," which signifies properly a tract of level land on the borders of a stream, continued for so great a distance as to make it a district of importance as a part of the inhabited country . . . . "Dell" is to dale, what valley is to vale; and implies that there is scarcely any level land beside the stream. "Dingle" is such a recess or dell clothed with wood; and "glen" one varied with rocks. The term "ravine" [means] a rent chasm among rocks.'

70. **landskip.** An older form of the word, occasionally used by a poet nowadays.

it. The eye, subject of 'measures.'

71. **lawns.** Not lawns in the present American sense of the word; but a stretch of grassy land.

73. That Milton was not in sight of the mountains when this was written does not affect the poetry. Coleridge had not even seen Mont Blanc when he wrote his remarkable poem about that mountain.

77. **Towers and battlements.** Readers have supposed Milton to be thinking of Windsor Castle. This is not

unlikely; Windsor may be seen from Horton, where the poem was probably written.

79. **lies.** Lives.

80. **Cynosure.** Cf. Dictionary. Cf. *Comus*, 341.

83. **Corydon and Thyrsis.** Milton has not only brought in mythological supernatural characters, but gives here classical names to his human personages. Corydon and Thyrsis were favorite names of shepherds in idyllic or pastoral poetry; Phyllis and Thestylis, of shepherdesses.

87. **bower.** Cf. Dictionary.

89. **Or if the earlier season lead.** Milton's recognition here of two periods of the year shows that he is not trying to adhere strictly to the pleasures of one particular day.

**lead.** Supply 'her'; but perhaps the verb is intransitive.

90. The omission may be supplied by 'to go.' Phyllis leaves her bower to bind the sheaves, or to go to the 'tanned haycocks.'

91. **secure.** Free from care. Compare with its present meaning.

97. **come.** The parsing of this word has caused some trouble. It may have one of three constructions:—And (to) young and old (who have) come forth to play; or, following 'when' (93),—when the bells ring, the rebecks sound, and young and old come forth. Or, indeed, we may count it as an irregular construction,—a principal statement independent of what has gone before.

102. **faery Mab.** Cf. *Romeo and Juliet* I. iv. 53.

**eat.** Past tense. This form (now pron. et) is in frequent use to-day as a substitute for ate.

103. **She.** One of the maids.

104. **And he.** One of the youths.

**friar's lantern.** Probably the will o' the wisp. Cf. Kittredge: *The Friar's Lantern and Friar Rush* (Publications Modern Language Assn., XV. 415). This line is a



difficult one to explain in connection with the line following. The reading of 1673:

And by the Friars Lanthorn led

gives an easy connection with the line preceding, but leaves 'Tells' (l. 105) entirely without a subject. Browne suggests 'Tales' for 'Tells,' the construction being then that of 'stories' in l. 101: the emendation does not satisfy, as it merely substitutes one awkward construction for another. Before the appearance of Professor Kittredge's article there was a difficulty about the passage, that was caused by the commentators and not by Milton,—the erroneous identification of the Friar with Friar Rush. This point having been settled in the article named, the real difficulty remains: namely, that 'he,' the rustic, tells of Robin Goodfellow; what then, is the reason for referring to the will o' the wisp? It is rather futile to say that the youth had once followed the *ignis fatuus* and now tells of the drudging goblin: the reference is irrelevant. The present editor has no better explanation to offer than the guess that 'by friar's lantern led' is here a figure of speech for 'mistaken': 'he, stupidly mistaken, tells about the drudging goblin.' But this seems far-fetched.

105. **drudging goblin.** Robin Goodfellow. A literary descendant of his is Puck in *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

106. **cream-bowl.** A bowl of cream seemed to be the goblin's compensation for his strenuous efforts.

110. **Then lies him down.** The construction seems still to depend upon 'Tells how.'

**lubber.** Clownish.

117. **then.** After the pleasures of the country have been exhausted. This passage, too, has caused much comment. Masson thinks it is only in his reading that L'Allegro sees the pomp and feast and revelry, etc., such

reading contrasting with the reading of *Il Penseroso*. Verity disputes this interpretation, remarking that the contrast is between *Il Penseroso's* reading and *L'Allegro's* lack of reading. Trent suggests the difficulty of bringing *L'Allegro* to the city. Of course if Milton is describing precisely one day, it would certainly be difficult to hear all the tales of the country-folk (however early bedtime might be) and then reach the city in time for all the festivities described, even if all these festivities could be given in the night. But I cannot find any scrupulous sense of time in either of these poems. May not Milton mean merely that when we have enjoyed the pleasures that rural life has to give us, then we are pleased by 'towered cities' and 'the busy hum of men'?

120. **triumphs.** Processions, tournaments, etc. See Bacon's essay *Of Masks and Triumphs*.

121. **store of.** Many.

122. **influence.** A word of astrology: the power over human affairs exerted by the stars; a 'flowing-in' of the power. *Cf. Nativ.* 71.

123. **both.** Wit or arms.

**wit.** In the older sense of intellectual attainment.

124. The lady who presided and gave the prizes (Keightley).

125. **Hymen.** The god of marriage. Hymen was a frequent character in marriage festivities.

127. **pomp.** Literally, a solemn procession; probably here in a more modern sense, as parade (Keightley).

128. **mask.** *Cf.* Introduction. *Comus* is a mask.

**pageantry.** A pageant was a movable platform or wagon on which actors in costume performed or posed. The mystery plays were given on pageants.

131. **well-trod.** The picturesqueness of this word is an argument against Masson's view that Milton was describing *L'Allegro's* reading only.

132. **Jonson's.** Ben Jonson, 1573-1637.

**learned.** Jonson was noted for his learning.

**sock.** The sock was the low shoe worn in Greek comedy: the buskin the higher shoe (with very thick sole) worn in Greek tragedy.

134. A charming but not very comprehensive or discriminating criticism of Shakespeare; but Milton probably had in mind the traditional spontaneity of Shakespeare, contrasting with the scholarship of Jonson. Rolfe rather too ingeniously thinks that Milton is speaking in the person of L'Allegro,—*i. e.*, presenting dramatically L'Allegro's notion of Shakespeare. But l. 117, 'please *us* then,' probably denotes that Milton was giving his own opinion of things that were pleasant to one who was in a cheerful mood. It hardly saves the critical value of the passage, either, to say that it applies only to the comedies, for these are as artistically put together as the tragedies.

135. **And ever.** And at all times.

**eating cares.** A Horatian expression.

136. **Lydian airs.** Among the Greeks there were three chief 'moods' (modes) in music: the Doric, the Phrygian, and the Lydian. 'The principal note of the last is F, its scale being the scale of F with B natural substituted for B flat. The tender character attributed by the ancients to this mode results from the ascent by a semitone to the key-note, the form of cadence most conclusive and agreeable to us moderns. Therein the Lydian measure differed from the Dorian, which was the key of D with F and C natural instead of sharp' (Browne). *Cf.* Century Dictionary: mode.

137. *Cf. Sol. Mus.* 2-3.

138. **the meeting soul.** The soul that they meet or affect.

139. **bout.** Turn.

141. Such a poise between spontaneity and control, that being under control the song seems yet spontaneous.

143. Perhaps a reference to the complexities of harmony and counterpoint.

145. **Orpheus** by his music won his dead wife back from Pluto, but on the condition that he should not look at her till the gates of Hades were past. He looked and lost 'his half-regained Eurydice.' Such music as Milton has in mind would have won Eurydice, free of conditions.

## IL PENSEROSO.

For date, etc., see note on *L'Allegro*.

**Penseroso** is an older form of the modern Ital. *pensieroso*.

1. **vain, deluding joys.** Note, not merely the difference in mood, but also the difference in treatment, of this prelude and the prelude to *L'Allegro*. Milton then contented himself with lively denunciation of Melancholy; now as becomes a thoughtful man (*Il Penseroso*) he gives reasons.

2. **Folly** pure and simple is the only source of the 'vain deluding joys.'

3. **bested.** Serve, avail. Bested (bestead) has other meanings, for which *Cf.* Dict.

4. **fixed.** Firmly established. The American student should be careful to note the difference between the English (and literary) use of the word 'fix,' and the American colloquial use (*e. g.*, in the sense of 'arrange').

**toys.** Trifles.

6. **fond.** Foolish. This earlier sense of the word survives in such expressions as 'a fond mother' *i. e.*, a foolishly indulgent mother.

**possess.** Causative sense: make to be possessed.

8. Milton could hardly have found a less material concrete image than this.

10. **pensioners.** Followers. *Cf.* Dict.

**Morpheus.** A dream god.

12. **Melancholy** means to-day a sadder state of mind than it did in Milton's verse. But Milton's use is not the original use.

16. **O'erlaid with black.** 'Darkened, made black; not covered with a black veil' (Keightley).

18. **Memnon's sister.** Memnon, son of Tithonus and Aurora, was king of the Ethiopians at the time of the Trojan war. He was dark-skinned, and of remarkable beauty. Commentators have questioned whether he had a sister. It seems that he had, but this is immaterial, as in either event Milton's lines have a point: as might be-  
 seem a sister of the beautiful dark Memnon himself.

**beseem.** Suit.

19. **Ethiop queen.** Cassiopea maintained her beauty to be above that of the Nereids. In the end, their wrath was satisfied by the exposure of Cassiopea's daughter, Andromeda, to a monster of the sea. Perseus rescued Andromeda. Cassiopea and Andromeda, after death, were placed among the constellations,—'starred.'

23. **Vesta.** Goddess of the hearth. She was the virgin daughter of Saturn, and it is Milton's own mythology to make her the mother of Melancholy. Critics have sought to fathom Milton's meaning, but without convincing success. The poet may have only intended to say symbolically that melancholy implied solitude and chastity. The following lines (27-30) are probably not to be taken symbolically; but may be regarded merely as a counterpart of the lines in *L'Allegro* (20-24), that describe the meeting of Zephyr and Aurora.

29. **Ida.** Mt. Ida in Crete.

32. **demure.** Milton uses the word in the sense of well-mannered.

33. **grain.** Hue rather than texture. *Cf.* Cent. Dict. As applied to color, it probably was first confined to scarlet; and here may mean purple.

35. **stole.** Probably in the sense of veil or scarf,

**cypress-lawn.** The first word is sometimes spelled *Cyprus*, as if the material (crape) first came from that island. 'Lawn' was a fine linen fabric. *Cypress-lawn*, then, was something like thin crape.

36. **decent.** Seemly.

37. **but keep thy wonted state.** In contrast with 'Haste thee, Nymph.' For 'state,' Cf. *L'Allegro* 60. Here the idea of dignity is obvious.

42. Cf. *On Shakespear* 14.

43. **sad.** The word has here still something of its earlier meaning of serious. An interesting example of the transition state of the word is to be found in *Romeo and Juliet* I. i. 169, and 205-208.

**Leaden.** Cf. Keats: "Leaden eye'd despairs."  
—*Nightingale*.

52. Cf. *Ezekiel*, x. Verity recalls, that of the celestial hierarchy the cherubim had as their special faculty the knowledge and contemplation of divine things.

55. And bring along silently the mute silence.

56. **Philomel.** The nightingale.

57. **saddest.** The word here seems verging toward our modern meaning. Cf. Shelley:

'Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.'

—*Skylark*.

**plight.** The meaning is doubtful. *Plight* etymologically means a folding and therefore may refer to the complicated notes of the bird; or it may have our meaning of state or condition.

59. **dragon-yoke.** Again Milton's mythologizing; *Cynthia* (*Diana*) was not drawn by dragons, as *Ceres* was.

60. The moon pauses above the accustomed oak, as if to listen to the bird's singing. 'Accustomed' may refer to the nightingale's choice of some one tree to sing in, or to the observer's habit of coming to that tree.

62. **most musical, most melancholy.** The poets have

variously interpreted the nightingale's singing. Three or four quotations may be made:

' O Nightingale! thou surely art  
A creature of a " fiery heart " :—  
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce ;  
Tumultuous harmony and fierce !  
Thou sing'st as if the God of wine  
Had helped thee to a Valentine.'

—*Wordsworth.*

' Thou warblest sad thy pity-pleading strains.'

—*To a Nightingale. Coleridge.*

And later from Coleridge, in different vein:

' A melancholy bird? Oh! idle thought!  
In Nature there is nothing melancholy.  
But some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced  
With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,  
Or slow distemper, or neglected love,  
(And so, poor wretch! fill'd all things with himself,  
And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale  
Of his own sorrow) he, and such as he,  
First named these notes a melancholy strain.  
And many a poet echoes the conceit . . .

'Tis the merry Nightingale  
That crowds, and hurries and precipitates  
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,  
As he were fearful that an April night  
Would be too short for him to utter forth  
His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul  
Of all its music !'

—*The Nightingale.*

' Hark! ah, the nightingale—  
The tawny-throated!  
Hark, from that moonlit cedar what a burst!  
What triumph! hark!—what pain!  
O wanderer from a Grecian shore,  
Still, after many years, in distant lands,  
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain  
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—  
Say, will it never heal!

. . . . .

Listen, Eugenia—  
 How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!  
 Again—thou hearest?  
 Eternal passion!  
 Eternal pain!

—*Philomela. Matthew Arnold.*

Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* must be read in full, for the poet in no one place tries to seize the exact effect of the bird's song.

64. **even-song.** The use of this word illustrates the difference in effect between the denotation and the connotation of a word. Strictly, it may mean song at evening; but 'even-song' has also the meaning of 'vespers,' or evening religious service: and Milton thus gives to the nightingale's song an almost religious significance.

72. **stooping through a fleecy cloud.** Coleridge described the same phenomenon even more explicitly:

'And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,  
 That give away their motion to the stars.'

—*Dejection. Coleridge.*

83. The **bellman** or night watchman often ended his cry of the hour, with a benediction. 'Charm' may mean the frequently repeated cry.

87. Sit up until morning, for the Bear watches all night.

88. **thrice-great Hermes.** Hermes Trismegistus ('thrice-great' translates the latter name), a mythical king of Egypt, to whom many books of later writers were ascribed; these books dealt with many forms of learning. To sit up all night reading Hermes Trismegistus was certainly the reverse of unscholarly.

**unsphere.** Figuratively to call from its sphere the spirit of Plato. Cf. *Comus* 3. Plato, none better, is appropriately a man for *Il Penseroso* to read, and of the Dialogues the *Phædo* may best serve to answer the question propounded in l. 90-2.

90. **vast regions.** Note how Milton brings out the



power of the mind by this forceful antithesis of 'vast regions' and 'fleshly nook.'

93. **And of those demons.** *Sc.* 'tell.' Demons, in the truer sense of the word; 'spirits.' Keightley calls attention to the fact that 'assigning them their abode in the four elements over which they have power rather belongs to the later Platonists, and to the writers of the Middle Ages.'

95. **consent.** A 'feeling-together' or agreement.

97. **Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy.** In these four lines it is reading, not acting, that is referred to; for of course there was in Milton's day no opportunity to see Greek drama. 'Gorgeous' is a fitting word to apply to the splendor of the subjects in tragedy. Such dramas as the *Œdipus* of Sophocles, the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, and the *Hecuba* of Euripides, may serve, among others, as examples, respectively, of the three subjects to which Milton refers.

101-2. Every reader likes to think that these two lines mean Shakespeare. There is nothing to show that they do not.

**buskined.** *Cf. L'Allegro* 132, note, p. 208. *Cf.* also *Arcades* 33, note p. 221.

103. **sad.** As before,—sober, serious. The thought of the extant Greek literature makes the poet long for the fabled songs of Musæus and Orpheus.

104. **Musæus.** A poet belonging to Greek mythology; the son of Orpheus, according to one tradition.

105. **Orpheus.** *Cf. L'All.* 145.

109. The reference is to Chaucer, whose *Squieres Tale* is unfinished. For the story the student may refer to *The Canterbury Tales*. Cambuscan (Cambinskam) was the Tartar king; Camball and Algarsife (Cambalo, Algarsyf), his sons; Canace (Canacee), his daughter. The 'virtue' of the ring was that its possessor should know the speech of birds and the properties of herbs; the

mirror would discover the true and the false, and show the future; the horse of brass would carry its owner wherever he wished. There is also in the story a magic sword, against which no armor was invulnerable, and which could cure the wounds it made.

112. **Canace.** Trisyllable. Milton not unnaturally brings up the question as to 'who had Canace to wife'; for Chaucer after referring to Cambalo as a son of Cambinskan, in the beginning of the tale, used the same name for the lover of Canacee, the daughter of Cambinskan.

113. **virtuous.** See note on l. 109.

116. The construction is condensed: 'and that thy power might call up other great bards if they have sung aught else,' etc. Critics agree that Spenser, at least, is meant; and probably Ariosto and Tasso.

120. Pretty certainly an allusion to such allegory as is in *The Faerie Queene*, although a simpler explanation is possible.

121. **pale.** The absence of color in the night is the justification of the word.

122. **civil-suited.** The meaning is clear, from the antithesis in the next line. Civil: civilian.

123. **tricked and frounced.** Adorned, and curled or plaited.

124. Cephalus, in the usual story, is the husband of Procris. He was a hunter, whom Aurora loved.

125. **kerchiefed.** Having a head-covering. Cf. Dict.

128. **his.** Its.

129. **ending** may belong to 'shower,' or, as Keightley suggests, to 'gust.'

130. When the shower is over, the drops fall slowly from the eaves.

132. **goddess.** Melancholy.

134. **brown.** Dark (Keightley).

**Sylvan.** Sylvanus, a forest-god.

135. **monumental oak.** The expression seems unmistakable until one finds that it has been taken to refer to the fact that monuments in churches were sometimes carved of oak. Most readers will prefer the notion of the oak as a very monument among trees. Spenser speaks of the 'builder oak.'

145. **consort.** Two meanings are possible: companionship, and consort. 'They' seems to refer to 'waters.'

147-150. These lines are difficult to interpret exactly. A probable construction is: 'And let some strange mysterious dream (laid softly on my eyelids) wave at his wings (Sleep's), displayed in airy stream of lively portraiture.' 'Wave at his wings' may mean a trembling movement corresponding to the uncertainty and mystery of dreams,—a movement caused by the wings of Sleep. 'Displayed' may refer to the dream, revealed in rapid succession ('airy stream') of vivid images ('lively portraiture'). In prose translation: 'Let a strange dream, coming softly before my eyes, tremble through its changes with the motion of Sleep's wings.' The passage has been much be-commented, and whatever plausible interpretation the student may find is likely to have some fair authority to support it.

151. (let) **sweet music breathe.**

153. **Spirit** has here, as often in Shakespeare and his contemporaries, a monosyllabic value. Cf. 'sprite.'

154. **Or (by) the unseen Genius.** Cf. *Arcades* 44.

156. **cloister's pale.** The cloister's limits. Some editors print 'cloisters pale,' *i. e.*, pale cloisters, which is the reading of 1645 ('Cloysters pale'). Warton suggested the emendation 'cloister's pale,' which may be the original meaning, as Milton did not usually use the apostrophe as the sign of the possessive. Landor, however, prefers the old reading (*Conversations of Literary Men*: XVIII. *Southey and Landor*). The exact scene of this description in these lines has been a matter of dispute. It really makes

no difference where the cloister was, or whether the next lines refer to a cathedral or a college chapel. Masson is doubtless right in thinking that Cambridge with its cloisters and chapels furnishes an appropriate original.

158. **antique.** Antick is Milton's spelling, and antic (fanciful or strange) may be his meaning. But had he meant 'antique' in our sense, he might still have spelled it as he did. The meaning 'ancient' seems the more fitting one.

**massy proof.** Some editors give 'massy-proof,' meaning (in rather a forced way) massive pillars proof (adj.) against the weight of the vaulting. Verity says, 'But proof may be a noun (in apposition to *pillars*), with the sense of solidity.' It is just possible that Milton wrote 'mass-yproof' (philologically at fault, as was 'star-ypointing'), which would give perfect sense: proof against the mass they upheld.

159. **storied windows.** That represent scenes from sacred history.

162. **quire.** Choir; not in an architectural sense.

169. The **hairy gown** would of itself suggest penance—a somewhat discordant note,—but 'peaceful hermitage' and 'mossy cell' indicate that the gown is merely part of the picture.

170. **spell.** Examine into, study.

173. **old.** Prolonged.

#### AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.

Date uncertain. Masson suggests 1633 or 1634; Rolfe 1630; other editors, dates between these extremes. Cf. note under *Circum.* p. 193. The title implies a concert of sacred music.

1. **pledges.** Perhaps in the sense of offspring; or pledges—assurances of the joyousness of heaven.

2. **sphere-born.** Rolfe suggests, born of the air or at-

mosphere, a line in *Comus* (241) having obviously this meaning of sphere. An allusion to the music of the spheres, see *Nativ.* 125, note, p. 189, is also possible.

4. **pierce** was a closer rime to 'verse' than it is now.
6. **concent**. The reading of 1673. Browne, following 1645 ed., reads 'content.'
7. *Cf. Ezek.* i. 26.
10. **burning row**. *Cf. Circum.* 1, note, p. 194.
18. **answer**. Answer to.  
**noise**. *Cf. Nativ.* 97, note, p. 189.
19. **as once**. Before paradise was lost.
20. **chime**. Harmony.
27. **consort**. Milton is probably playing seriously upon the word, meaning fellowship and music. The pun, consort—concert, would not have been offensive in serious writing of that and an earlier day. Indeed, much of the punning and wordplay of Shakespeare seems to be rather more like alliteration in intention and effect than like the small jest a pun is in our day.

#### ON TIME.

Date uncertain. *Cf.* note on preceding poem, and note on *Circum.* p. 193. The words [To be] 'set on a Clock-case' are found (crossed out) in the Cambridge MS. Milton did not print them.

2. **call on**. In the sense of 'incite to greater speed.'
3. **plummet**. Certainly refers to the slow-moving weight of the clock, not to the comparatively quick-moving pendulum.
4. **womb**. An older use of the word. *Cf.* Dictionary.
11. **our bliss**. Us, who shall then be blissful.
12. **individual**. Not to be divided, hence, probably, eternal.
18. **happy-making sight**. The Beatific Vision (Newton). Sight means our sight of God. The somewhat involved

construction may be resolved into: When once our souls shall climb to sight of Him, the sight alone rendering us happy, then quit of all this grossness, and attired with stars, we shall, etc.

21. attired. Keightley gives a number of instances to show that Milton might have meant 'crowned,' not 'clothed,' as the most commentators have it.

## ARCADES.

Date uncertain. The fact that it is a fragmentary mask leads some editors to place it near *Comus* (1634) in point of time,—say 1633. Internal evidence is here not very conclusive: although in style, the poetry is nearer to *Comus* and *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* than to the Nativity ode. It certainly precedes *Comus*, and probably by a year or two.

The 'entertainment,' of which this is a part, was given in honor of the Dowager Countess of Derby, who had the rare, indeed the unique, fortune to be celebrated poetically by the two great poets, Spenser and Milton. She was the daughter of Sir John Spencer, and was married first to Ferdinando, fifth Earl of Derby (at whose death she became Countess Dowager), and second to Sir Thomas Egerton. It should be noted here that Lady Frances Stanley, her daughter by her first marriage, was afterward married to Sir John Egerton, son of Sir Thomas Egerton by a former marriage. This Sir John Egerton became Earl of Bridgewater, in whose honor *Comus* was given. The Countess Dowager was over seventy at the time *Arcades* was written, and the occasion was doubtless one of unusual interest. One may imagine how readily the younger members of the family entered into the spirit of the festivities which were to do honor to the great lady, who was no stranger to poetical praise. For not only had Spenser written of her, as had Harrington, and Davies,

and doubtless others, but a mask had been composed for her in 1607 by Marston. As Masson suggests, there can hardly be any doubt that the composer Lawes (see note, p. 267, on the *Sonnet to Lawes*), who was at that very time, doubtless, in attendance upon the family as teacher of music, had much to do with the entertainment; and if he had, then without much question, it was through him that Milton was asked to write the songs that were to be set to music and the speech that was to be declaimed. And, to carry the hypothesis to its legitimate conclusion, Milton's success with *Arcades* must have been a sufficient reason for inviting him to write the more ambitious mask, *Comus*.

The little play, slender of plot, but graceful, is given in the evening in open air. Evidently the Countess is seated on a throne of state: to her approach the Arcadians 'in pastoral habit,' and as they draw near they sing their song of praise. Then the Genius of the Wood meets them, speaking words in honor of them and of the lady. The speech breaks into song at the close, and is followed by a chorus (probably) which ends Milton's share in the entertainment. There may have been more both to precede and to follow, but we have only what is before us here.

**Arcades.** Trisyllable: Ar'-ca-des. Inhabitants 'of famous Arcady.'

2. **sudden blaze of majesty.** This may be a mere compliment, or, as Masson suggests, the 'seat of state' may be 'arranged so as to glitter in the light.'

7. **solemn search.** As if the maskers had been searching the 'fair wood' for her. 'Solemn' has here something of its original meaning: pertaining to an annual ceremony. Cf. l. 39: 'glad solemnity.'

8. **Fame,** etc. The Countess had been praised by Spenser and other poets.

**raise.** 'Extol,' of which word 'raise' is really a translation.

9. **erst.** Before we had seen her.

13. **bid** (Fame).

14. **radiant state.** Again the useful word, 'state.' It may mean stateliness, or merely a state or condition of radiance, or 'radiancy proceeding from where she was sitting in state' (Keightley).

20. **Latona** was the mother of Apollo and Diana.

21. **Cybele**, or Rhea, was the mother of the gods. In art she was represented with a turreted diadem.

23. **Juno dares not give her odds.** Even Juno must contend with her on equal terms. Masson suggests a more personal application than the other commentators have thought of: that as the Countess (like Cybele) sat with her descendants about her, even the handsomest (Juno) must yield to her.

26. **gentle.** In its earlier sense of 'nobly born.'

30. **Alpheus.** Written 'Alphéus' in MS. A river in Arcadia. One story is: Alpheus was a river god who fell in love with the nymph Arethusa, bathing in the stream. She fled to Ortygia, near Sicily, he following under ground and 'under seas.' He rose in the fountain called Arethusa, meeting her at last. Cf. Coleridge: *Kubla Khan*:—

' Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.'

33. **buskined.** Wearing the high shoe of the huntress nymphs. Cf. *L'Allegro* 132, note, p. 208.

**as great and good** as their companions, the swains.

34. **free.** Voluntary, liberal.

46. **curl.** 'Curled' was a frequent adjective for wood or grove, as if the foliage resembled the curled hair of a lady. Todd quotes similar uses of the word from Drayton, Jonson, Browne, Drummond, and Sylvester. Carry-



ing out the image, the poet speaks of ringlets and woven windings, which need not be translated respectively into specific kinds of foliage.

50. **Evil dew.** Cf. 'wicked dew,' *Tempest* I. ii. 320.

51. **Thwarting** has probably its original meaning of transverse, rather than its later meaning, preventing. 'Thwarting thunder blue' may have been intended by Milton to show the same picture as Shakespeare's 'cross [zig-zag] blue lightning.' *Jul. Cæs.* I. iii. 50 (Warton).

52. **cross.** Adverse. The 'dire-looking planet' is probably Saturn: 'Smities' recalls Shakespeare's 'No planets strike.' *Hamlet* I. i. 162.

57. **horn.** The huntsman's.

60. **murmurs.** Charms murmured.

63. **celestial sirens.** Not the Muses, unless Milton is again his own myth-maker. The reference in these lines, as has been frequently pointed out, is to a passage in Plato's *Republic* X., the tale of Er. The part that Milton had in mind was the vision of the spindle of Necessity piercing the eight whorls or spheres which fitted into each other. On each sphere was a siren, who sang one note; the eight making a harmony. The daughters of Necessity, the three Fates, to the accompaniment of the sirens, sing of the past, present, and future. (The student should refer, of course, to the text itself.) It will be seen that Milton has not adhered rigidly to the Platonic description, although following it in the main. The eight spheres of Plato have become nine (although Milton elsewhere—*P. L.* iii. 481-3—refers to ten spheres), possibly to make their number, and hence the number of the sirens, equal to that of the Muses; the three Fates are listening instead of singing; and the power of music to 'lull' the three is spoken of. Other variations may also be traced, but the notion of the music of the spheres is essentially that given in the vision referred to. Cf. note, *Vac. Ex.* 34, p. 183.

65. Strictly, only Atropos holds the shears. *Cf. March. Win. 28.*

66. The Fates helped to turn the spindle and spheres (in the Platonic vision). Milton seems to be referring both to the spindle which passed through the spheres and to the spindle which Clotho held in her hand.

74. **blaze.** Declare, proclaim.

75. **her.** The Countess's.

79. **lesser gods.** The Genius is one of these.

81. **state.** Her throne.

97. **Ladon.** An Arcadian river.

98. **Lyceus, Cyllene.** Arcadian mountains; as are also Erymanthus and Mænalus, a few lines later.

106. **Syrinx** was a nymph who was pursued by Pan. She was changed into a reed, which the god made into musical instrument.

## COMUS. 1634.

The things that led to the composition of *Comus* are not known absolutely, but they may be guessed with reasonable certainty. It was determined to give a mask at Ludlow Castle, in honor of the Earl of Bridgewater, then entering upon the presidency of Wales. Henry Lawes, who acted in the mask and composed its music, was in all probability the man who was responsible for asking Milton to write the words. How agreeable the task was to Milton is, of course, mere speculation: but one guesses that having entered upon the task, the poet performed it as a labor of love; for surely never had a man a task more in keeping with his powers.

The Earl of Bridgewater, step-son and son-in-law of the Dowager Countess of Derby (see *Arcades*, introd., p. 219), was appointed by Charles I., in 1631, Lord President of Wales. He appears not to have gone to his official seat during the two years following his appointment; but the

notion that this mask was part of the inauguration festivities rests upon no easily found authority. It may have been, indeed, that the formal induction into office was postponed until 1634; but there is nothing that editors have quoted to show that this is anything more than the first great entertainment given by the Earl after assuming the presidency. That *Comus* would have made a fitting part of the inaugural ceremonies, however, is obvious.

*Comus* was first published in 1637, not by Milton himself, but by Lawes, who put it forth anonymously. Lawes had received so many requests for MS. copies of the mask, that the 'often copying of it' not unnaturally became burdensome to the musician; and the poem 'so much desired' was put into accessible print. It is significant that it was Lawes, not Milton, who was thus called upon for copies of *Comus*. Apart from the fact that Lawes took a prominent part in the performance, as composer of the music he probably seemed to the world as the main person concerned with the creation of the mask,—the person, therefore, to ask for the libretto. The poet was of much less consequence. Ben Jonson had complained bitterly, indeed, that the poetry in a mask was thought subordinate to the other things in it; nevertheless as one reads such a mask as Shirley's *Triumph of Peace*, one readily admits that in some masks, at least, the musical composer, the scene-painter, the costumer, may have been of more real value than the poet in providing a gay and brilliant entertainment.

The title. Milton does not call his mask 'Comus,' but entitles it in 1645, and 1673, 'A Mask' ('maske,' MS., and Lawes, 1637). I do not know who first printed the mask under the title *Comus*, which has now become fixed. Newton in 1766 used the old title; Verity refers to the use of the title, *Comus*, in a Glasgow edition of 1745.

The dedication. This appeared in Lawes's edition of 1637, was reprinted in the edition of 1645, and was omitted

in that of 1673. Sir Henry Wotton's letter had the same fortune.

Stage direction. **descends.** By some kind of machinery, perhaps a strong wire, the Attendant Spirit was lowered to the stage from above.

2. **mansion.** In its earlier sense of 'abiding place.' Cf. *John* xiv. 2; *Il Pens.* 92.

**those.** More forcible than 'the.'

3. **insphered.** Sphere imagery is not infrequent in Milton. The use of the word here is figurative.

4. **serene.** Some editors, too curious in their scansion, have indicated an accent on the first syllable of the word. Such accentuation makes a smooth line, but the usual pronunciation gives to the line an unusual and pleasing cadence.

6. **low-thoughted.** Milton is within his poet's right of making a participle out of a noun. So also, 'talented' and 'gifted,' occasionally objected to because no verb 'to talent,' 'to gift,' exists. Language is not logical, but sensible.

7. **pestered.** Encumbered, crowded; not 'annoyed,' which is a later meaning. An interesting word, going back through O. F. *empestrer* to M. L. *in* and *pastorium*, a clog upon a horse at pasture (Skeat).

**pinfold.** A pound, with which word 'pin' is cognate.

10. **this mortal change.** Several explanations are at hand: death (the change from mortality, or else a mortal, *i. e.*, fatal change); a figure in a dance (Browne), as if this life were but gay and thoughtless movement; and 'mortal state of life' (Masson). A simpler explanation may be offered, 'change' as a generic word, 'changefulness.' A collect in the Prayer Book (Communion Office) beginning, 'Assist us mercifully,' has: 'Among all the changes and chances of this mortal life.'

11. **sainted seats.** It is interesting to mark in this passage the easy, and to Milton perfectly natural, transition

from profane to sacred, from mythology to religion. Jove's court has in it sainted seats! And observe how much more 'sainted' means than 'sacred' would have meant.

**enthroned.** The spelling and consequent accentuation of this word (*enthron'd*, as Milton most probably pronounced it; or *enthronèd*, as best suits our ear) raises an interesting question: as to whether we should retain a poet's accentuation that has ceased to be melodious to us, when we can, without violence to the metre, substitute a modern accentuation. It seems to me no greater a departure from the poet's notion than is the inevitable change in the pronunciation of the language. It would be absurd for us to pronounce Shakespeare's lines as they were pronounced in his day 'in spite of the fact that Shakespeare would have been unable to follow easily one of his own plays as spoken by our actors. Following Milton, I have left the last syllable, 'ed,' unaccented, but should be willing to hear the word read as a trisyllable.

13. **golden key.** Cf. *Lycidas* 111. The language here becomes very unclassical just before dipping back into mythology in the word 'ambrosial.'

16. **ambrosial.** Literally, 'immortal.' 'Ambrosia,' the noun, has a narrower range of meaning than the adjective, and refers usually to the food of the gods.

20. To Neptune fell the islands, as well as the sea,—the whole realm between the heavens and the lower darkness which fell to Jupiter and to Pluto respectively—'high and nether Jove.' (I use here the Latin names, instead of the Greek, because Milton has said Neptune, not Poseidon.)

23. **unadorned.** Otherwise unadorned.

25. **several.** Separate.

28. Not a mere idle compliment. Milton, like Shakespeare, loved his country. Every editor naturally likes to put this passage alongside of the speech of old John of Gaunt's in *Rich. II.* II. i. 40.

29. **quarters.** 'Divides' is the simple interpretation; perhaps a literally fourfold division is meant, although this seems hardly likely. Such a division might be England and Scotland, the Northern counties and Wales, as Keightley suggests. But these quarters are not mutually exclusive. No explanation, however, is quite satisfactory. The word 'But,' in l. 27, seems to introduce an antithesis between Neptune's disposal of the other seagirt isles and his disposal of Britain. That antithesis, if it exists, should appear in l. 29; but the line suggests no such interpretation.

30. **This tract.** Wales.

31. **A noble Peer.** The Earl of Bridgewater.

34. **princely.** Used figuratively.

35. **state.** Cf. *L'All.* 60.

37. **perplexed.** Entangled, not perplexing; save as perplexity follows complexity.

44. What follows, the story of Comus's parentage, was, indeed, purely a Miltonic invention.

45. **hall and bower.** An expression frequently met with in poetry; meaning literally, as here, the hall of the castle (the great dining and living room of the whole household), and the private or ladies' apartments; figuratively, as in Wordsworth's sonnet on Milton (*London, 1802*), l. 4, standing for the whole home life of the days of chivalry.

46. **Bacchus.** The god of wine.

48. Cf. the Latin construction, *post conditam urbem*. The story of the transformation into dolphins of the mariners who having seized Bacchus would have sold him into slavery, is told in the Homeric *Hymn to Bacchus* and by Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III. 660. Keightley points out that the sea was the Ægean, and the sailors Tyrrhenians.

49. **Tyrrhene.** The Tyrrhene sea is between Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia.

as the winds listed. Cf. *John* iii. 8.

50. **Circe.** An enchantress whom Ulysses met (*Odyssey* x. 133 f.), and whose magic potions changed men into beasts,—wolves, lions, and swine. Her island was *Ææa* in the Tyrrhene Sea.

55. **youth.** Youthfulness.

57. **Comus** does, indeed, resemble **Circe** more than **Bacchus**.

58. **Comus.** **Comus**, as a god, does not belong to the regular classical mythology. No commentator that I have noted refers to an earlier authority than Philostratos the Elder (Verity quotes from the *Imagines* I. ii.), who lived in the third century A. D.: Philostratos describes a picture in which **Comus** is represented as drunk and asleep. Ben Jonson, in his mask of *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1619), presents **Comus** as the 'god of cheer or the Belly,' a character not at all akin to Milton's **Comus**. A Latin work by Hendrik van der Putten (*Puteanus*), entitled *Comus*, probably first published in 1608, and later, strangely enough, in Oxford in 1634, has as its main character a figure more like Milton's **Comus** than like Jonson's. Whether Milton paid much attention to these works cannot be determined. His own **Comus** is distinctive enough to be regarded as a Miltonic creation; but at the same time, it seems very likely that Milton was acquainted with the work of the Dutch professor. For a fuller discussion of this point, cf. *Introd.*

59. **frolic.** Cf. Ger. *fröhlich*.

60. **France and Spain.**

61. **ominous.** Full of omens, or portents.

65. **orient.** Bright.

67. **fond.** Foolish.

68. **count'nance.** So in 1645. To spell it in full would suggest an Alexandrine.

72. A variation of the Circean bodily transformation, which was complete. Newton ingeniously suggested a

good reason for the difference: that the crew of Comus could be much more easily presented on the stage if only the heads were changed. Indeed, it is not impossible that Milton originally conceived the bodily transformation as complete, and later made the alteration. Homer allows no change in the minds of Circe's victims,—they can see and lament their 'foul disfigurement'; the mental degradation of Comus's followers is complete.

79. **adventurous.** Dangerous.

83. **Iris' woof.** Iris, the rainbow goddess; and 'woof,' the threads that run crosswise in the weaver's frame. The 'sky-robes' were woven out of the rainbow.

86. Lawes himself is the subject of the compliment. Cf. the sonnet to Lawes, p. 103.

87. Cf. the construction of *Lycidas*, l. 10-11.

88. **Nor of less faith.** Understand: than skill.

89. **office.** Duty, function.

90. **likeliest.** Most fitting (Verity), or preferably, likeliest to be near (Trent).

93. The evening star. Keightley, followed by everybody, recalls 'the unfolding star calls up the shepherd,' in *Meas. for Meas.* IV. ii. 218.

94. **top of heaven.** High up, not necessarily the zenith; the 'roof of heaven.'

97. **steep.** A somewhat perplexing word, variously explained: 'deep' (Browne); 'as the sun's car comes to it, as it were, down a steep descent' (Keightley); Verity suggests the upward slope of the sea, as one looks at it from the shore. The last interpretation would doubtless be right, if the line had been written by a modern poet; hardly right for Milton. Perhaps the sea growing deeper and deeper—a steep descent—is meant.

98. **slope.** Sloped, sloping; like 'create' for 'created.'

99. **dusky pole.** The north is meant, as the MS. indicates.

101. Cf. *Psalms* xix. 4-5.



105. **rosy twine.** A twine of roses.
111. We that are made of a purer element,—fire.
112. **quire.** Usually taken literally, as if to imply the music of the spheres which are spoken of in the next line; but it may be merely figurative, 'the host.'
113. **Spheres.** *Cf. Vac. Ex. 34, note, p. 183.*
116. **morrice.** Or morris, a Moorish dance.
121. **wakes.** Merely the English word for vigils. Originally a vigil kept before a church holiday; merriment made it a carousal.
129. **Cotytto.** A Thracian goddess of wild revelry, whose rites were secret.
132. **spets.** Spits. In MS., spitts.
135. **Hecate.** Here dissyllabic (as usually with the Elizabethans), and printed Hecat' in the 1645 edition. Hecate was a goddess (probably Thracian in origin) of witchcraft.
139. **nice.** Fastidious; here used contemptuously, as of one disposed to be too good to join the revels.
141. **descry.** Reveal.
142. **solemnity.** Ceremony. *Cf. Arcades 7, 39.*
144. **round.** A dance, in which, probably, circular motion was originally the main thing, *e. g.*, one in which all the dancers joined hands and danced round a circle. Measure obviously originally indicated a dance in which the rhythm was carefully kept,—as a minuet; but here 'measure' and 'round' apply to the same 'wild, rude, and wanton antick' (MS.).
147. **shrouds.** Shelters.
151. **trains.** Allurements.
154. **dazzling spells.** The MS. had 'powder'd' at first, but the word was erased and 'dazling' written over it. The change may indicate that Comus was first meant to throw some powder into the air, but that later some substance was used that was capable of ignition.
- spongy.** Absorbing the spells like a sponge, and remaining charged with them.

155. **blear illusion.** Illusion that makes blear or dim to the truth the eye that observes.

157. **quaint.** Here used in a sense akin to the present meaning; unusual. *Cf. Nativ.* 194.

167. **keeps up.** When he might be expected to be asleep.  
**gear.** Affairs, business. As in Shakespeare. *Cf. Richard III.* I. iv. 158.

168. **fairly.** Softly.

169. The line has been read, following an erratum of the 1673 edition:

‘And hearken if I may her business hear’

But the MS. and the 1645 text sanction the reading here given.

**may.** Can.

175. **granges.** Barns or granaries.

180. **inform.** Direct. *Cf. S. A.* 335.

181. **blind.** Obscure, dark, and leading nowhere. *Cf. blind alley* (Verity).

188-190. This famous image is not to be taken too literally. The incongruity of anything that resembles a sad (serious) votarist in palmer's weed rising behind Phœbus' wain is hardly to be escaped, if the visual aspect of the lines is insisted upon. Taken more simply, the image justifies its repute. Evening comes on quietly, with fading colors; hence the first part of the figure: at the close of day; and hence the second part.

**hindmost wheels.** One usually thinks of 'Phœbus' wain' as a two-wheeled chariot, which therefore has no 'hindmost' wheels.

195. **stole.** Stole, 1645 and 1673; stolne, MS.

203. **rife and perfect.** Prevalent and distinct.

204. **single.** Complete; nothing but darkness.

208. One thinks irresistibly of *The Tempest* (III. ii. 143). Browne, especially, mentions the point.

212. **siding champion.** A champion who sides with one.

215. **Chastity**, where another person might have thought of charity. A Miltonic conception.

216. **ye**. 'You' would be rather better English. 'Ye' is a nominative.

225. **casts**. The construction seems to change, but 'casts' and 'does turn' belong together; we should keep the parallel form, 'cast.'

231. **shell**. The MS. corrects (in margin) to 'cell,' but does not erase 'shell.' Shell is usually taken to mean the vault of the heavens. There is a bare possibility that the word is used figuratively for 'body.'

232. **Meander**. A winding river in Asia Minor, that has given a verb to the English language. The word 'slow' was added in the margin: observe the metrical value of the addition.

235. **her sad song**. Cf. *Il Pens.* 62, note, p. 211.

237. **Narcissus**. The beautiful youth for whom Echo pined in vain, and who, falling in love with his own reflection in the water, himself pined away and was changed into a flower.

241. **sphere**. Cf. *Sol. Mus.* 2.

242. **translated**. Transferred. We retain this use of the word in speaking of a bishop, 'translated' from one see to another. Cf. *Heb.* xi. 5, and *Gen.* v. 24.

243. **resounding**. 'Re-sounding grace' is especially apt, addressed to Echo. Again note the unexpectedly serious touch: 'heaven' is obviously no pagan Olympus.

248. **his**. The antecedent is 'something holy.' Observe that Milton prefers the old neuter genitive 'his' to the comparatively recent 'its.' Cf. *Nativ.* 106, note, p. 189.

249-252. A figure easier to feel than to explain sensibly. They ('raptures') floated upon the silence of night, at every fall ('cadence') smoothing the darkness till it smiled. Most of the difficulty that has arisen over the passage is due to the use of the same kind of image (wings, raven down) in two unrelated ideas (silence, darkness). 'It'

(l. 252) cannot refer to 'down': the MS. reading, 'she,' makes it obvious that 'darkness' is the antecedent.

253. Circe's association with the Sirens is not Homeric: The *Odyssey* places them upon another island. Circe's attendants (*Odyssey* x. 350-1) were Naiads (l. 254). The variation may be Milton's own, or, as Warton points out, Milton may have read William Browne's *Inner Temple Mask* (about 1615), in which the same license occurs.

254. **flowery-kirtled.** Having garments made of or trimmed with flowers; surely not 'flowered' (as of silk) (K.), or because the Naiads were gathering flowers (Warton, quoted by K.).

256. **as they sung.** The Circean nymphs culled simples, according to Ovid. Homer and Ovid make no mention of their singing. Browne (see above) speaks of their song.

257. **Scylla and Charybdis** (259), the rock and the whirlpool, between which mariners found it so hard to sail. The strait was not near enough, by many leagues, to Circe's island for the singing to be heard; and by associating the Sirens with Circe, Milton removes the possibility of reference to the Sirens' own island, which according to some accounts, was in the strait

262. **home-felt.** Deeply felt. Cf. home-thrust.

267. **Unless** (thou be).

268. **Dwell'st.** Attracted from the third person.

**Pan**, the god of shepherds; **Sylvan**, a wood-god.

271. **ill is lost.** 'A Latinism, *male perditur*' (K.).

273. **extreme shift.** Last resort.

277-290. This line for line dialogue (stichomythia) is to be found in Greek drama. A modern example (in shorter lines) is *Richard III.* I. ii. 193-203. Cf. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* I. iii. 77-89.

285. **prevented.** Anticipated.

286. **hit.** Guess.

290. **Hebe's.** Hebe, the daughter of Zeus and Hera,

was the goddess of youth; and before the capture of Ganymede, was cup-bearer to the gods.

291. **what time.** At the time when.

**laboured** Hard-worked.

293. **swinked.** Hard-worked, tired.

297. **port.** Bearing.

299. **element.** Air, sky.

301. **plighted.** Folded (plaited).

**Awe-strook.** An old form of awe-struck.

310. Referring to the sureness with which one familiar with a region may know in utter darkness by the feel of his feet on the ground whether he be keeping the path.

312. **dingle, dell.** Cf. *L'All.* 68, note, p. 204.

313. **bosky.** Bushy, wooded.

**burn.** The explanation (Verity, Moody) of this word as a brook (burn) is unsatisfactory; Comus seems to be naming the places he knows, where the brothers might be, and obviously does not mean to imply that they are in a brook. Warton's explanation is older, simpler, and adequate: 'a winding, deep, and narrow valley, with a rivulet at the bottom.'

315. **stray attendance.** An abstract and not especially good way of saying 'strayed attendants.'

316. **Shroud.** Pres. subjunctive. Have shelter. Cf. 1. i47.

317. The lark's nest is on the ground.

318. **her thatched pallet.** Her bed of woven straw,—in other words, her nest.

**If otherwise.** If they be farther strayed than these limits. Comus really offers the Lady lodging provided her brothers are beyond his reach, but she accepts without asking that search be made.

323. Milton's democratic spirit hardly needs pointing out.

325. **courtesy** takes its name from 'court.'

327. **less warranted.** Where there is less warrant for thinking herself safe.

329. **square my trial.** Make my trial suited to my strength. The word 'proportioned' introduces an unnecessary idea: 'which will then have been proportioned to it.' In other words: suit my trial to my strength, my strength to my trial,—a statement that returns upon itself.

334. **disinherit.** Dispossess; as 'inherit' sometimes meant merely 'to have.' The following images of reigning and usurping, however, make the usual meaning possible.

**your.** Plural.

336. **influence.** The astrological sense of the word, 'a flowing-in' (*Cf. L'All. 122, note, p. 207*), is made more obvious by the verb 'dammed.'

337. The mixing of figures,—usurping mists damming up influence,—only helps to show that mixed figures are not necessarily (although perhaps usually) bad.

338. **rush candle.** A candle in which a rush serves as wick.

340. **thy.** Refers to 'taper.'

341. **star of Arcady.** Callisto, a princess of Arcadia, was transformed by Diana into a she-bear, and placed by Zeus among the stars. Callisto thus became the Great Bear, her son Arcas the Lesser Bear. The Greek sailors were guided by the former, the Tyrians by the latter. Any star of the former might be called a 'star of Arcady'; the pole-star forming part of the Lesser Bear's tail (cynosure, lit., dog's tail) was the 'Tyrian cynosure.' Later the word came to be applied to an object that fixes the attention. *Cf. L'All. 80.*

345. **oaten stops.** *Cf. Lyc. 33, note, p. 253.*

349. **innumerable.** Innumerable.

359. **over-exquisite.** Over-curious, too searching in your desire.

360. To determine what the evils are like, before it is certain that they exist.

361. **For grant they be so.** Either, grant there be evils;

or, better, grant it be not ascertained whether the evils exist or not.

362. **date of grief.** The time when his grief will come.

366. **so to seek.** So at a loss.

369. **noise.** Sound. *Cf. Nativ.* 97, note, p. 189.

370. 'She' is understood.

376. **seeks to.** Has recourse to.

379. In the manifold activity of society.

380. **all to-ruffled.** The MS. and the early (1645 and 1673) editions have 'all to ruffl'd,' which may stand for three things: (a) all too ruffled; (b) all-to (completely) ruffled; (c) all to-ruffled, *to-* being intensive, a prefix of not infrequent use at, however, an earlier day than Milton's. 'All to-ruffled' has been the preferred reading of our time. It has the advantage of a clear meaning and weight of authority; the disadvantage of being an archaic form, and one that Milton neither wrote nor printed (the 'altoruffled' of 1637, quoted by the Oxford Dictionary, not having Milton's authority behind it). 'All too ruffled' would seem to give the simplest meaning, and the one most near to the MS. and 1645 text. *Judges* ix. 53, which has been cited, hardly affects the point.

382. **centre.** Of the earth. Shakespeare uses the same expression. *Hamlet* II. ii. 159.

390. **weeds.** *Cf. L'All.* 120. Milton's search for the right words shows most interestingly in the MS. erasures. At first he wrote *beads*, then *gowne*, then *beads* again, then *weeds*; the following line reading at first

'his books, his hairie gowne, or maple dish.'

This was changed in MS. to the present reading.

393. **Hesperian tree.** The dragon-guarded tree in the garden of the Hesperides, that bore the golden apples. It was one of the labors of Hercules to obtain them. See note to 982, p. 251.

395. **unenchantèd.** Not to be enchanted.
401. **wink on.** Be blind to.
404. **it recks me not** (of). I take no account of.
407. **unowned,** hence unprotected by the responsible person.
408. **Infer.** Draw conclusion, argue.
409. **without all doubt.** We should say, 'without any doubt,' or 'beyond all doubt.'
413. **squint.** Looking askance. Spenser's picture of Suspicion (Suspect) is frequently quoted in illustration of this expression. Cf. *F. Q.* iii. 12, 15.
419. **if.** Although, even if.
423. **trace.** Traverse.  
**unharbored.** Unharboring.
426. **bandite.** Milton's spelling.
430. **unblenchèd.** Fearless.
432. The usual reference to *Hamlet* I. i. 158 is a matter of words rather than of substance. Far more to the point is the passage in Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*, I. i. (first quoted by Newton):

' Yet I have heard (my mother told it me,  
 And now I do believe it), if I keep  
 My virgin-flower uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair,  
 No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,  
 Satyr, or other power that haunts the groves,  
 Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion  
 Draw me to wander after idle fires' . . .

434. **unlaid ghost.** To 'lay' a ghost was to exorcise it; a ghost unlaid would be free to wander from curfew to cockcrow.
436. **of the mine.** Referring to the notion that mines were inhabited by gnomes.
438. **or shall I call Antiquity.** The previous allusions are not to classic things, but to folk beliefs. Myths of Greece are now to be referred to.
439. **the old schools of Greece.** Probably merely a



reference to the scholarly atmosphere that now envelopes the Greek myths, as distinguished from the popular belief in superstitions. It seems hardly necessary to make the line refer to Greek philosophy.

441. **Hence**, etc. Todd quotes Thyer's reference to Lucian's dialogue between Venus and Cupid, in which the latter declares that the Gorgon head on the shield of Minerva frightened him, so that he durst not meddle with her; and that Diana was so employed in hunting that he could not catch her. Milton makes the tangible bow and arrows of the one, and the Gorgon's head of the other, symbols of the power of chastity.

447. Minerva's shield bore the head of Medusa, one of the Gorgons. Snakes, instead of hair, crowned Medusa's head; whoever looked upon it was turned to stone. Medusa was slain by Perseus, who avoided direct sight of her by seeing her reflection in his polished shield.

451. **dashed**. Confounded.

453. By skillful transition Milton passes from the goddesses of pagan mythology to the angels.

454. **sincerely so**. Chaste without flaw.

455. **lackey**. Attend.

457. **vision**. Trisyllabic.

460. **Begin**. Milton wrote 'begins,' but erased the final *s*; he wrote 'turnes' in l. 462, but did not make the change to the subjunctive that we should expect. This may be an accident, for there is no obvious reason for the inconsistent syntax.

462. *Cf. P. L.* v. 469-505.

465. **lavish**. Unrestrained.

467-475. Newton refers to Plato's *Phædo* as containing the substance of these lines. A passage may be quoted (which embodies also the spirit of the three or four preceding lines):—'But the soul which has been polluted, and is impure at the time of her departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always, and is in-love

with and fascinated by the body and by the desires and pleasures of the body, until she is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form, which a man may touch and see and taste, and use for the purposes of his lusts,—the soul, I mean, accustomed to hate and fear and avoid the intellectual principle, which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, and can be attained only by philosophy;—do you suppose that such a soul will depart pure and unalloyed?

Impossible, he replied.

She is held fast by the corporeal, which the continual association and constant care of the body have wrought into her nature.

Very true.

And this corporeal element, my friend, is heavy and weighty and earthy, and is that element of sight by which a soul is depressed and dragged down again into the visible world, because she is afraid of the invisible and of the world below—prowling about tombs and sepulchres, near which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions of souls which have not departed pure, but are cloyed with sight and therefore visible.’—*Jowett's translation.*

468. **Imbodies and imbrates.** Becomes like a body (material) and turns brutal (gross).

473. **it.** The ‘shadows damp, oft seen’ would seem to require ‘they’ instead of ‘it’; but Milton is probably thinking of one such shadow ‘sitting by a new-made grave.’

474. **linked.** A participle.

**sensuality.** Milton's word in the MS.

476. **How charming.** Milton may pay this compliment freely, since it is Plato, not himself, that he praises.

478. In *Love's Labour's Lost* (IV. iii. 342), Shakespeare speaks of love,

‘as sweet and musical  
As bright Apollo's lute.’

480. **crude.** Unripe; or, perhaps, undigested. Milton liked a feast to be dainty but not extravagantly profuse. *Cf.* with this passage the *Sonnet to Lawrence*, l. 9-14, p. 108. The same temperate spirit is shown.

483. **night-foundered.** Sunk and lost in the night.

490. **That hallo.** The answering cry of the Attendant Spirit. The stage direction in the MS. reads: 'he hallows [a space occurs here in the original MS.] the guardian Dæmon hallows agen & enters in the habit of shepheard.'

491. A line whose cadence is Fletcherian. 'Iron' is dissyllabic, and 'else' is the eleventh syllable. 'Iron stakes' are swords.

494. The strains of Thyrsis seem to be as potent as those of Orpheus.

495. Eighteen rhymed lines follow. There is no obvious reason for departing from blank verse, although more or less valid excuses may be framed for the change. It is interesting to note that the MS. first read 'valley' instead of 'dale' (496).

**huddling.** Hurrying.

**madrigal.** A shepherd's song, originally. For the madrigal as an artistic verse-form, *Cf.* Schipper's *Englische Metrik* ii. 886-893.

501. **next.** Nearest. This meaning would make the whole line an address to the elder son, as his father's heir and dearest joy. Possibly, but not probably, 'next joy' refers to the younger son.

502. **toy.** *Cf.* *Il Pens.* 4. The meaning 'trifle' is implied in 'trivial,' but a rhyme-word is needed.

503. **stealth.** That which was stolen.

506. **To.** Compared to. We say colloquially that a certain thing 'is nothing to' something else.

508. **How chance.** How does it chance that. *Cf.* Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar*, § 37.

509. **sadly.** Seriously. A frequent use. *Cf.* *Romeo*

and *Juliet* I. i. 205-210. In these lines from Shakespeare the double meaning of the word is clearly indicated.

515. **sage poets.** 'Sage' was to Milton a fitting word for poets and poetry. *Cf. L'All.* 17; *Il Pens.* 117. Homer and Virgil 'storied' (told in story) the things here spoken of.

517. **Chimeras.** Monsters with lion's head, goat's body, and dragon's tail. *Cf. P. L.* ii. 628.

520. **navel.** Centre.

526. **murmurs.** Charms. *Cf. Arc.* 60.

529-530. **unmoulding . . . Charactered.** Breaking up, or melting, the mold of reason of which the face had shown the stamp.

531. **crofts.** Small inclosed fields.

532. **brow.** Are like a brow to the glade.

534. **stabled wolves.** This may mean 'wolves that have got into the sheepfolds' (Rolfe), or who have been 'caught fast' (Trent merely suggests), or more probably (as most commentators think), 'wolves in their lairs.'

535. **Hecate.** *Cf.* 135, note, p. 230. Here trisyllabic.

539. **unweeting.** Unwitting.

542. **dew-besprent.** Sprinkled with dew.

547. **meditate.** *Cf. Lyc.* 66.

548. **ere a close.** Before the music reached a final cadence.

553. The early editions (1637, 1645, 1673) read 'drowsie frighted'; but the MS. gives 'drousie flighted,'—a reading which Masson retains (with a hyphen joining the words). Certainly 'drowsy-flighted' gives better sense, in so far as the steeds themselves are concerned. But 'Gave respite to' (*i. e.*, gave an opportunity to delay or rest) seems at least partly to warrant 'frighted': frightened by the noise of the rout, the drowsy steeds are given a respite by the sudden stillness. Why drowsy *flighted* steeds should be given respite by the silence is not entirely clear to me. On the whole, the fact that Milton

wrote 'flighted,' and did not change it in the MS., although he made careful corrections only two lines below, makes the reading given in the text seem the preferable one.

558. **Was took.** Was charmed. Verity quotes *Hamlet* I. i. 162-3. Cf., also, *Winter's Tale* IV. iv. 118:

'Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty.'

560. **still.** Ever.

560-2. **I was all ear . . . ribs of Death.** It seems quite unnecessary to seek an explanation of this splendid image in the fact that Milton may have seen some allegorical print or other. Doubtless Milton was able to write it because he was a poet.

567. **how near.** How near thou art to, or preferably, being so near to.

568. **lawns.** Cf. *L'All.* 71, note, p. 204.

573. **prevent.** Cf., with this use of the word, *Nativ.* 24.

575. **such two.** Two persons such as the Lady described.

585. **period.** Sentence.

586. **for me.** For my part, as far as I am concerned.

591. **meant most harm.** Meant to be most harmful.

592. **happy trial.** Trial happy in its outcome.

597. **consumed.** The MS. and the 1645 reading is 'consum'd.' This leaves the line a syllable short. Pronouncing -ed would make the line more metrical, but the disyllabic pronunciation of 'consum'd' gives peculiar emphasis to 'this.'

598. Cf. *Paradise Regained* iv. 455-6.

603. **legions.** Trisyllabic.

604. **Acheron.** A river of Hell, here used for Hell itself. Cf. *P. L.* ii. 578.

605. **Harpies.** Filthy birds of prey, with women's heads,

**Hydras.** Cf. *Sonnet to Fairfax* 7, note, p. 269.

607. **purchase.** Booty, spoils.

608. **curls.** Shakespeare also speaks contemptuously of curled hair. Cf. *Lear* III. iv. 88.

610. **yet.** Although it is of no avail; or perhaps, the word is used in the sense of 'still.'

611. **stead.** Good, service.

617. **make this relation.** Relate this.

**shifts.** Cf. 273.

619. Supposed to be an allusion to Milton's friend, Charles Diodati (accent on antepenult), who was well versed in botany. Milton's *Epitaphium Damonis* is an elegy on the death of Diodati.

621. **virtuous.** Of curative power.

626. **scrip.** Pouch.

627. **simples.** Medicinal herbs, which might serve as constituent parts of a compound; the parts being single or 'simple.'

630. **me.** Ethical dative.

633. **Bore.** The subject of the verb seems to be missing, but 'the plant' is easily supplied. Scan the line: Bore a | bright gol | den flower | but not | in this | soil.

634. **like esteemed.** Esteemed as much as it is known; that is, un-esteemed.

635. **clouted.** Patched.

636. **Moly.** The plant that enabled Ulysses to resist Circe. *Odyssey* x. 302-306.

637. **He.** The 'shepherd lad.'

**Hæmony.** Hæmonia was a name of Thessaly, a land of magic; and it has been supposed that Milton thence chose the name for the plant. Coleridge elaborately explains it otherwise: 'Apply it as an allegory of Christianity, or, to speak more precisely, of the Redemption by the Cross . . . Now what is Hæmony? *αἷμα ὄλως*, Blood-wine. "And he took the wine and blessed it and said, 'This is my blood,'"—the great symbol of the Death on the

Cross.' Cf. Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, vol. i., 406-407 (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1895).

641. **apparition.** Five syllables.

645. **though disguised.** Comus appeared before the Lady, disguised as a 'harmless villager' (l. 166).

646. **lime-twigs.** Figurative for 'snares'; literally, twigs smeared with bird-lime,—a device for catching birds.

655. Cacus, a son of Vulcan, fought with Hercules, 'atros ore vomens ignes.' Cf. *Aeneid* 8, 198, ff.

661. **Daphne,** fleeing from Apollo, was changed by her father, Peneus, into a laurel tree, thereafter sacred to Apollo.

662. **Root-bound.** Referring to 'you,' or, as readily, to 'Daphne.'

665. **while.** So long as.

670. **returns.** The word seems to involve the figure of the sap returning in spring.

672. **cordial julep.** Cordial, heartening; julep, originally rose-water (Persian), later a more generic term for a bright liquid.

675. **Nepenthes.** 'A drug to lull all pain and anger, and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow.' *Odys.* 4, 221 (tr. Butcher and Lang). The wife of Thone was Polydamna; Helena was Helen of Troy, daughter of Zeus and Leda.

685. **unexempt condition.** Condition from which no one is exempt. 'Condition': four syllables.

686. **mortal frailty.** More conventionally, 'frail mortality.'

688. **That.** Refers to 'you,' l. 682.

695. **ugly-headed.** Masson reads 'oughly,' following the editions of 1645 and 1673; but the MS. has 'ougly.'

698. **visored.** Masked, disguised.

700. **lickerish.** Tempting to the taste.

702-3. Newton pointed out that Milton found his idea

in the *Medea* of Euripides: *κακοῦ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δῶρ' ὀνησιῖν οὐκ ἔχει*, 'the gifts of a base man profit nothing.'

707. The general meaning of the line is clear, but the word 'budge' provides an ambiguity. One meaning, current in Milton's time, was 'fur' (probably 'lambskin'), which was used in ornamentation of the scholastic hoods and gowns; another meaning (not ascertained to be current when *Comus* was written) was 'pompous.' The tautology, if the first meaning is taken, is only apparent, not real. 'Stoic fur': the kind of fur indicating the school of Stoics; used figuratively, of course; the hoods vary in color and trimmings according to the degree and the university conferring it.

708. **Cynic tub.** The tub of Diogenes. Comus would naturally hold in contempt the Stoics and Cynics.

714. **curious.** Careful, fastidious.

719. **hutchd.** Hoarded, as in a hutch or chest.

721-2. *Cf. Daniel* i. 12. Comus can quote Scripture for his purpose. 'Pulse,' pease, beans, etc.; 'frieze,' a coarse woollen cloth, made originally in Friesland.

724. A compact construction. Although his riches might be known but in part, yet they would be despised.

727. Perhaps a reminiscence of *Hebrews* xii. 8.

728. **Who.** Nature.

730. The MS. reading shows the scansion:

'Th' earth cumber'd & the wing'd aire dark't wth plumes'

732-6 A somewhat difficult passage. 'They below' may mean 'men,' or 'creatures of the deep.' The MS. (erased passage) gave:

'the sea orefraught would heave her waters up  
above the shoare, and th' unsought diamonds  
would so bestudde the center wth thire starrelight'

but this only makes the position of the diamonds more perplexing.



737. **coy.** Disdainful, rather than shy.

739-744. A most familiar idea in the poetry of Shakespeare's and Milton's times.

743. A check mark in the MS. may indicate that Milton meant to revise this extra-syllabled line. It may be scanned in two ways :

If you | let slip | time like | a neglect | ed rose  
If you let | slip time | like a | neglect | ed rose

744. **It.** Beauty.

745. **brag.** Boast.

750. **grain.** Color; originally scarlet.

751. **tease.** A technical, not a metaphorical, word here: to card or comb.

**huswife.** Spelling parallel to 'husband.'

752. **vermeil-tinctured.** Vermilion, from *vermiculus*, a little worm, the cochineal insect (*coccum*; later *granum*, from which 'grain,' l. 750).

759. **pranked.** Bedecked.

760. **bolt.** Sift, as flour; so, to refine upon.

779-806. Not in MS. The lines contain the very essence of Milton's doctrine of chastity, and were doubtless added to make the teaching unmistakable.

791. **fence.** Art of fencing, said figuratively; or perhaps, 'defence.'

**her** refers to rhetoric.

793. **uncontrolled.** Uncontrollable.

797. **brute Earth.** Warton noted Horace's *bruta tellus*.  
*Od.* i. xxxiv. 9.

**her nerves.** Her strength of tendon and sinew.

800-806. An aside; as perhaps also l. 756-761.

801. **set off.** Enhanced, or set apart as if unanswerable.

802. **though not.** Though I am not.

803-5. A reference to wrathful Jove's use of thunderbolts in the war of the Titans, sons of Cronus (Saturn); against the gods. The defeated Titans were fettered in

Tartarus (the infernal regions), or, as Milton has it here, Erebus (place of darkness).

807. **mere.** Absolute.

808. **canon laws.** Fundamental laws, as established by highest ecclesiastical authority. 'Foundation,' as if Comus and his rout were a solemnly founded institution, carries out the figure.

809. Another irregular line.

**Lees and settlings.** A reference to the theory that melancholy was one of the 'humours' of the blood, the heaviest part, which, unless dispelled, settled like the dregs (lees) of wine, and made the blood corrupt.

816. **rod reversed.** The old notion of undoing the effects of magic by reversing the process whereby the charm 'took.' A similar fancy is not unheard of now: that saying a prayer backwards, after the manner of witches, produces a curse instead of a blessing.

817. **dissevering.** Releasing.

822. **Melibœus.** A pastoral name, here referring either to Geoffrey of Monmouth or (more probably) to Spenser, both of whom told the story of Sabrina; the former in his history of the Britons (twelfth century), the latter in *F. Q.* II. x. 14-19.

823. **soothest shepherd.** Truest poet. This makes the preceding line seem clearly a reference to Spenser. It could be meant only ironically, if an allusion to Geoffrey.

824. **not far from hence.** The Severn was not far to the east of Ludlow.

825. **curb.** Power that curbs.

827. **whilom.** In former days. Loctrine, son of Brutus, married Guendolen, but also loved Estrildis, by whom he had a daughter Sabra (Sabrina). When Loctrine sought to divorce Guendolen, she made war upon him, and he fell in battle. Estrildis and Sabrina were flung into a river, henceforth to be called Severn, after the innocent

virgin. Milton does not tell the story here precisely as he does in his *History of Britain*.

832. **his.** Its.

**cross-flowing.** Flowing across the path of her flight.

834. **pearled.** Water-nymphs might appropriately wear bracelets of pearl; but there may be a special allusion to the belief that pearls were to be found in the Severn.

835. **Nereus** was a sea-god and hardly belongs in fresh water.

836. **lank.** Drooping.

838. **nectared lavers.** Baths, or vessels for washing, into whose waters nectar or flowers had been dropped. Verity suggests that 'nectared,' like 'ambrosial,' may be used in the sense of fragrant. But *cf.* *Lycidas* 175.

**asphodel.** A flower that blossomed in the Elysian fields; daffodil.

839. The outer doors of the senses; ears, eyes, etc.

845. **Helping all urchin blasts.** Helping to mitigate the curses (blasts) of evil spirits. 'Urchin' originally meant a hedgehog.

852. **old swain.** Melibœus. Spenser, however, does not mention Sabrina's magic power. Milton may have found it in Drayton's *Polyolbion*.

863. **amber-dropping hair.** Masson suggests yellow hair with water-drops falling through it and looking like amber. Milton may mean literally, however, hair that dropped amber, as if the drops of water that fell from it were changed to something precious.

865. **silver lake.** Perhaps the river Severn, or perhaps used as a generic term for water.

867. The MS. direction in the margin is 'to be said,' indicating that the passage is to be spoken, not sung.

868-880. **Oceanus.** The god of the stream of Ocean, which flowed around the earth. Tethys was his wife. Neptune was the ruler of the sea; Nereus a sea-god. The 'Carpathian wizard' is Proteus, whose home was in the

Carpathian sea, on Carpathos, an island between Crete and Rhodes; he could assume whatever shape he chose (our adjective is 'protean'); and being a sea-shepherd needed a 'hook.' Triton, the sea-herald (whence his 'winding shell'), was 'scaly,' because, like a merman, he was half fish. Glaucus was a fisherman who became a sea-god, and spoke prophecies. Leucothea, 'white goddess,' was formerly Ino, wife of Athamas, who slew one of their two sons. Ino leaped into the sea with the other son, Melicertes, and both became sea-deities. This son, now to be known as Palæmon, was a god of harbors. Thetis, daughter of Nereus, was the mother of Achilles. The Sirens were creatures who by the charm of their singing lured mariners to destruction. Parthenope and Ligea were Sirens; the former's tomb was at Naples,—'dear,' perhaps because Milton thought romantically of the city, but the reason for the adjective is not obvious. Critics have called attention to the classic source of many of Milton's epithets in this passage.

894. **turkis.** Turquoise.

895. Some commentators (Bell, Trent) find a difficulty here, in that turquoise and emerald were not to be found in the Severn, as Milton knew. But it may be remarked that after Milton has once 'located' Sabrina's dwelling-place, he is undisturbed by a desire to be true to locality; Sabrina becomes a goddess of the water, and immediately the imagined riches of river and sea are at her service. *Cf.* l. 932-3.

913. **of precious cure.** ('Drops') of great value and power to cure.

914. **Thrice.** The familiar mystic number.

921. **Amphitrite.** The wife of Neptune. For 'bower' *Cf.* l. 45, note, p. 227.

923. **Anchises' line.** The line is Anchises, Æneas, Ascanius, Sylvius, Brutus, Lochrine.

927. **snowy hills.** Of Wales.

934-7. These four lines have troubled the commentators. After the first two lines of the invocation, however, Milton is thinking of the river, rather than of Sabrina; even the 'tresses fair' of l. 929 may be regarded as the foliage on the banks. The immediate difficulty is the 'with' in l. 937: does it belong with 'crowned' (l. 934)? If so, the crowning of the 'lofty head' with groves here and there upon the banks, is a rather mixed idea. But it would seem not too difficult to imagine a river crowned at its head with tower and terrace, and crowned upon its banks with groves. This gives a construction difficult to parse, but easy to comprehend.

945. **this gloomy covert.** It is not necessary to suppose (as do Masson and Verity) that the scene must have changed, by this time, from the palace of Comus to the surrounding forest; especially since Milton says nothing of a change of scene. A single gesture of the Attendant Spirit standing within the palace would indicate clearly where the 'gloomy covert' was. So, too, one need not leave the house to see the stars (l. 956).

950. **his wished presence.** Another compliment to the Earl.

**Stage Direction. Country Dancers.** A country dance was a *contre danse*, i. e., one in which the partners stood opposite (*contra*) each other, as in the Virginia reel.

960. **without duck or nod.** An indication that the dances following would be more stately and graceful.

962. **such court guise.** In such courtly figures.

963. **Mercury** was not specifically a leader of the Dryad dances, but as Osgood points out (*Classical Mythology in Milton's English Poems*, p. 42), such devising is in accord with classic descriptions.

964. **mincing Dryades.** Dainty wood-nymphs. Mincing has lost its prettier meaning, and represents now only the finicky aspect of neatness.

965. **lawns.** Cf. *L'All.* 71, note, p. 204. Leas, meadows.

972. **Assays.** Trials. Essays is another form of the word.

976. Everyone has noted a resemblance in these lines to Ariel's song, *Tempest* V. i. 88.

982. **Hesperus.** The spirit of the evening star. Milton makes the Hesperides the daughters of Hesperus. They were beautiful, sweet-voiced maidens; in their garden was the tree on which grew the golden apples. Cf. l. 393, note, p. 236.

984. **crisped.** Curled; referring to the leaves ruffled by the breeze.

985. **spruce.** Dainty. Derived from Prussia or Spruce.

986. **rosy-bosomed hours.** Gray used these words in his *Ode to Spring*.

991. **nard and cassia.** Aromatic plants.

992. **Iris.** Cf. l. 83, note, p. 229.

993. **blow.** Make to blow.

995. **purpled.** Embroidered at the edges.

999. **Adonis.** The youth loved by Venus. He was killed by a wild boar.

1002. **the Assyrian queen.** The Phœnician Astarte, here identified with Venus. In *Nativ.* 200-204, Ashtaroth or Astarte is referred to in connection with Thammuz, the Syrian Adonis.

1004. **advanced.** Because the love of Cupid and Psyche was less earthly than that of Venus for Adonis.

1005. **Psyche,** beloved of Cupid, was persecuted by Venus, who enjoined upon her many labors. The episode of the oil dropped by the inquisitive Psyche upon Cupid's cheek is one of the most familiar stories in mythology.

1007. Zeus, after a council of the gods, decreed that Psyche should be restored to Cupid.

1009. **side.** Body.

1015. **bowed welkin.** The sky, curving to the horizon.

1017. **corners.** Horns.

1021. **sphery chime.** The music of the spheres.

## LYCIDAS. 1637.

Edward King, who was a student at Christ's College, Cambridge, during part of Milton's career at the same college, was drowned at sea, 10 August, 1637. The ship on which he was going from England to Ireland, struck a rock near the Welsh coast, and most of those on board were lost. A memorial volume was prepared by the friends of King, and in this book of Latin, Greek, and English verse, *Lycidas* is the last and greatest poem.

1. **once more.** Milton had written little or nothing since *Comus* (1634).

**Laurel, myrtle, and ivy** are plants more or less sacred to poetry. In coming to pluck their berries, Milton enters again the field of poetry.

2. **brown.** Has here the meaning of 'dark,' as in *II Pens.* 134.

**never sere.** Evergreen. No antithesis is intended between 'brown' and 'never sere.'

5. **before the mellowing year.** As many editors point out, this refers to the poet himself, not to King. Before he was ready to write, the 'bitter constraint' compelled him.

7. **compels.** The singular verb (with the plural subject) is sometimes to be explained as a survival of a Northern plural in *-s*; sometimes as a logical expression, following the collective notion of the plural subject; and sometimes as a case of attraction,—the verb agreeing with the second of two nouns. *Cf. Ps. cxxxvi.* 6, note, p. 178.

8-9. Milton employed effectively a similar repetition in *Fair Inf.* 25-26.

10. **he knew, etc.** King had written some Latin verse; in Masson's opinion, of no great merit. The construction, 'he knew to sing,'—is Latin and Greek, rather than English. The MS. has: 'he well knew.'

11. **rhyme.** The spelling 'rhyme,' originally incorrect,

may perhaps be yielding to the true spelling 'rime.' Milton here uses the word in the sense of verse in general.

13. **welter.** To toss about, roll.

15. **sisters of the sacred well.** The Muses. The sacred well was the Pierian spring at the foot of Mt. Olympus, according to Masson; Aganippe on Mt. Helicon, according to Jerram. Either place serves; for, as Masson notes, the Muses' birthplace was the former, their later abode the latter.

16. **seat of Jove.** Olympus, or the altar on Helicon, according to the reference of the former line.

19. **Muse.** Used here in the sense of 'poet.'

20. **lucky.** Auspicious.

**favour my destined urn.** Sing such a lament for me when I am dead. One thinks of the 'lucky words' of Wordsworth's sonnet on Milton.

23-36. In a prolonged figure, Milton tells of his association with King. It is hardly necessary to find an actual meaning under each figurative expression. Rather, Milton, having chosen to speak in a metaphor, of the pursuits of the young scholars, turns his thought to the metaphor itself, and intends but little specific symbolism by it.

25. **lawns.** Pasture lands. *Cf. L'All.* 71, note, p. 204.

27. heard the gray-fly at the time that she winds, etc.

28. **gray-fly.** Sometimes called trumpet fly.

30. Milton first wrote 'even-star', and then erased it; perhaps because the evening star, as critics have noted, does not rise.

32. The rural songs were heard; or the rural songs that we made were heard.

33. **oaten.** A word not infrequent in English verse, and used as if a classic pastoral expression. But as Jerram points out, 'the classical authority for such usage is more than doubtful.' *Avena*, the Virgilian word that is responsible for much of the English usage, is susceptible, Jerram suggests, of a more generic translation than 'oat.'



But its meaning is clear: 'oaten flute' is a rustic or pastoral pipe. The line seems to us to have a trochaic movement, but Milton did not so intend it. He printed: 'Temper'd to th' oaten flute'; which gives, of course, the iambic movement.

34. Perhaps a reference, gently playful, to the undergraduates; perhaps not.

36. old **Damœtas** is unidentified. It would not be uninteresting to know what friend of Milton's was thus pleased with the poet's early work; for surely there seems to be a personal meaning in this line. The name Damœtas is found in Theocritus and in Virgil.

45. **canker**. Canker-worm, as in *Mids. Night's Dream* II. ii. 3, as well as frequently elsewhere in Shakespeare.

46. **taint-worm**. Supposed to be a small, red spider, called a 'taint.''

52. **the steep**. Some mountain, not identified, in Wales.

54. **Mona**. Anglesey.

55. **Deva**. The Dee, which had the reputation of being potent to affect the fortunes of England and Wales, between which countries it flows. Hence 'wizard stream.' Cf. *Vac. Ex.* 98.

56. **Ay me**. Cf. *Cent. Dict.* ay, 2.

58. **the muse**. Calliope was the mother of Orpheus.

59. **her enchanting son**. Her son who performed enchantments. For Orpheus cf. *L'All.* 145, note, p. 209.

61. **the rout**. The Thracian women, who, offended by Orpheus after his return from Hades, tore him to pieces: his head, thrown into the Hebrus, floated to the isle of Lesbos.

64. **Alas, what boots it**, etc. Of what use is it to give oneself up to poetry, which calls for such incessant care and demands so much from its votaries?

65. **slighted**. The word may go with 'shepherd,' implying that the poet is slighted by the world; or with 'trade,' implying that even the poets have slighted their work,—

as Milton himself had not. Milton had lofty notions of what a poet should be. But preferably, it seems to mean that Milton felt that in his day poetry itself was slighted.

66. **meditate the muse** is an un-English expression. In Virgil (*Ecl.* i. 2, and vi. 8), it meant to compose a poem. Milton seems to give it a meaning of his own: a paraphrase of the line might run:—'And give oneself up to the strict and thoughtful pursuit of poetry, which does not reward its followers.' 'Thankless' may mean, 'giving no thanks,' or 'receiving no thanks'; poetry thanks no one for devotion to it, or no one is thankful for it: the former interpretation seems preferable.

67-9. Were it not better to give up poetry and live a life of sheer pleasure? The idea that Milton is contrasting stern poetry with the love poetry which he might have written more easily, 'as others use', is rather too bookish,—especially in the light of l. 72. Warton thought that Milton had in mind certain Latin poems of Buchanan's, in which the names *Amaryllis* and *Neæra* were used (Todd disposed of this by pointing out that '*Amaryllis*' there meant the city of Paris!). Verity inclines to think that 'others' were such contemporary poets as Herrick and Suckling. There is no real reason to think that the 'others' are poets at all.

68. **Amaryllis** and **Neæra** are pastoral names, as *Lycidas* is.

72. The noble mind that has conquered all other infirmities may yet crave fame. Milton, I take it, does not say this disparagingly, but philosophically: a mind superior to everything that would be a temptation to weaker natures, having only the one human weakness—the desire to know that one's work has been accepted at its true worth.

75. **blind Fury**. Strictly a Fate, not a Fury, if *Atropos* is referred to, as seems most probable. 'The Fate malignant as one of the Furies' (Rolfe).

76. **slits.** Cuts, not necessarily lengthwise ; an older meaning.

**But not the praise, etc.** Though the life be cut short, the true reward (rightful praise from Jove) will follow, declares Phœbus, the god of poetry ; true fame is of heaven, not of earth.

77. **touched my trembling ears.** Touching the ear, says Conington (quoted by Jerram), was a symbolical act, the ear being the seat of memory. Conington's remark refers to Virgil, *Ecl.* vi. 3. That which a god touched may well have trembled.

79-80. There is difference of opinion as to the construction here. Does 'set off to the world' modify Fame or foil? The former gives the simpler interpretation, to which the present editor inclines : Fame is not set off to the world in the glistening foil, *i. e.*, dazzling the eye with tinsel. The other interpretation is : Fame does not lie in the false show which is itself set off (displayed) to the world. The student may puzzle out the difference. Each reading has something for and against it.

81. **by.** 'By means of' ; or perhaps, 'near.'

82. **Jove.** Milton here, and Gray frequently (as in the *Hymn to Adversity*), to mention but two poets, use the word 'Jove' strangely. It does not mean 'God,' exactly ; nor 'Zeus,' exactly. It is as if one meant a divine power applied in a situation distinctly fanciful, where 'Zeus' would be too unreal, and 'God' would be too sacred.

83. **lastly.** Definitively.

84. **in Heaven** may go with 'fame' or 'meed,' preferably the latter.

85. **Arethuse.** Cf. *Arcades* 30, note, p. 221.

86. **Mincius.** A river near Mantua, Virgil's birthplace. As Virgil sang of Mincius, so Theocritus sang of Arethusa. Milton's apostrophe is to the sources of pastoral poetry.

87. These words of Phœbus were of a higher mood than pastoral poetry, to which the poet now returns. 'Mood'

here is neither our word 'mood' (state of feeling) nor is it a technical use of the musical word (*Cf. L'All.* 136, note, p. 208). It is a figurative use of the latter.

89. **herald.** Triton.

90. That came in Neptune's case or action to inquire into the cause, as a judge might; or came to offer Neptune's plea or apology. The first explanation seems the better one.

95. The winds knew nothing of the loss of Lycidas, because they were not present. The boat went down in a calm.

96. **Hippotades.** Æolus, god of the winds.

99. **Panope** and her sisters were Nereids, or daughters of Nereus, a god of the sea.

100. The ship was fatal and untrustworthy, built in an ominous time, its rigging cursed by evil spirits (or, when it was rigged, curses were uttered upon it).

103. **Camus.** The god of the river Cam, on which is Cambridge.

105. **figures dim.** Either inwoven designs dim with age; or tracings said to be seen (here all the commentators follow Dunster) on sedge leaves that have begun to wither; the marks being especially on the edge of the leaves.

106. **sanguine flower.** Hyacinth. *Cf. Fair Inf.* 25, note p. 180. The flower showed the Greek *alaî* (alas) on its petals. 'inscribed with woe' may modify flower, or sedge, according to the meaning given to the preceding time.

107. **pledge.** Offspring.

109. St. Peter. *Cf. Matt.* iv. 18; *Luke* v. 3.

110. *Cf. Matt.* xvi. 19. The fixing of the number of keys as two is ecclesiastical, not scriptural; and making one gold and one iron is Miltonic.

111. This idea cannot be looked into very closely. The reader may well stop with the thought of the appropriately beautiful and stern metals.

112. **mitred.** Wearing the bishop's head-dress.

113-131. This denunciation of the condition of the English church represents Milton the Puritan as clearly as do any of his writings.

114. **Enough.** The usual reading is 'Enow.' In 1645 Milton printed 'Anow,' and his MS. reads 'Anough.' It seems not worth while to retain an archaic form which has neither MS. nor the 1645 edition back of it.

118. **the worthy bidden guest.** It is not certain that Milton had a specific class in mind. Keightley thinks that 'the faithful minister of the Gospel, who was really called by the Spirit,' is meant. But such a one is the 'faithful herdman' of l. 121. Perhaps the communicants of the church are referred to.

119. **Blind mouths.** A bold and compact way of saying 'Blind to every thing but that which satisfies their gluttony.'

122. **sped.** Cared for.

123. **when they list.** When they wish; not, when they ought.

**flashy.** Not our modern use; but flash-like, probably, in the sense of 'by fits and starts.'

124. **scrannel.** A word not satisfactorily accounted for; probably 'harsh,' 'squeaking.'

126. **wind and the rank mist.** Idle teachings and false doctrines.

128. **grim wolf.** This, from Milton, can hardly mean any thing else than the Roman Catholic Church, which could not then, of course, proselyte very openly ('privy paw').

129. **and nothing said.** Because many of the clergy were in sympathy with Rome.

130. **two-handed engine.** No passage in Milton, probably, has called forth more guesses than has this expression. Whether it means the two-handed ax used eight years later to behead Archbishop Laud (Warton's amusing

speculation), or the two Houses of Parliament (Masson's ingenious suggestion), or the sword of justice (Verity's guess), or the ax that 'is laid unto the root of the tree'—*Matt.* iii. 10 (Newton), or anything within these limits, the student may determine, if he can. At any rate, Milton meant that something emphatic would put a stop to the corruption of the clergy; and his prophecy came true.

132. **Alpheus.** Cf. *Arcades* 30, note, p. 221.

133. **Sicilian Muse.** Pastoral poetry.

136. **use.** Haunt, or inhabit.

138. **swart star.** The dog-star.

**sparely.** Sparingly.

142. **rathe.** Early. The comparative is 'rather.'

143. **crow-toe.** Crow-foot.

146. **well-attired.** 'Having a handsome attire or head-dress, *i. e.*, flower' (Keightley).

151. **laureate.** Laurelled.

**hearse.** Not our meaning of funeral car, but probably an earlier use of the word,—a platform, or tomb, hung with black and appropriately decorated, here with laurel. A third meaning, 'bier,' is possible.

152. For, to ease the strain of our grief, let us imagine, as we have been doing ('so'), that the body of Lycidas is really here—but alas, etc. 'Let our thoughts dally' refers, I take it, not to the future, but to that which has just happened, namely, the 'false surmise.'

154-5. There is a logical difficulty here: *shores* and *seas* wash away the body. But in this very compact writing we may reach the sense without being thwarted by a literal construction of the language. Milton had in mind the shores and seas—the body hurled on some shore, washed by some sea. Or it may be that he meant that the body tossed between sea and shore.

158. **monstrous world.** World of monsters.

160. **the fable of Bellerus.** This means, according to the editors, the fabled abode of Bellerus; presumably because

it ought to mean that. The ultimate sense is clear, but the expression is puzzling.

**Bellerus.** Milton makes up the name and the person (without attributes) from Bellerium, the Roman name for Land's End.

161. The mount is St. Michael's Mount, (near Land's End), guarded by the apparition of the Archangel himself, who looks south to Spain.

162. This line was obscure until some one pointed out to Todd that in two editions of Mercator's *Atlas* (1623 and 1636) Namancos and Bayona were to be found in Galicia in Spain. Galicia is nearly due south of Land's End.

163. **angel.** St. Michael.

164. Dolphins saved Arion, the Greek bard, who was thrown overboard by the sailors. The miracle, performed because Arion's singing enchanted the dolphins, may easily have been in Milton's mind as he thought of his hapless poet-friend.

168. **day star.** The sun.

170. **tricks.** Arranges, adorns.

176. **unexpressive.** Inexpressible.

**nuptial song.** *Cf. Rev. xix. 7.*

184. **In the large recompense.** This is thy large recompense. The word 'in' is momentarily confusing; but we say 'in recompense.'

186. **uncouth.** Perhaps in its early sense of 'unknown.'

187. **quills.** Reeds. The line refers to the varying tone of the poem,—now tender, now indignant.

189. **Doric lay.** Pastoral song or poetry, because such poetry was written in the Doric dialect. *Cf., also, L'All. 136, note, p. 208.*

190. The sun had lengthened the shadows of the hills.

192. **twitched his mantle.** Drew it about him.

193. This line, so often misquoted (by the persistent substitution of 'fields' for 'woods'), doubtless hints at new plans of Milton's own: his purposed trip to Italy, or

a determination to turn to other kinds of poetry. The poems, *Fair Infant, Marchioness of Winchester, University Carrier*, not to speak of *The Passion*, had been elegies of one sort or another.

## TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

Date of composition not known. In the 1645 volume it precedes the sonnet on his twenty-third birthday.

1. *Cf. Il Pens.* 62, note, p. 211.
4. **jolly.** Beautiful and joyous. *Cf. Dict.*  
**propitious May.** The nightingale comes in April.
6. **First heard.** If first heard. The superstition is referred to in the Chaucerian *Cuckoo and Nightingale*, l. 47:

"I thoghte how lovers had a tokeninge,  
And among them it was a comune tale,  
That it were good to here the nightingale  
Rather than the lewde cuckow singe."

(‘Rather’ here means ‘earlier.’)

9. **bird of hate.** The cuckoo, as opposed to the nightingale.
13. The Muse might appropriately call the nightingale her mate because of its beautiful singing.

## ON HIS HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE. 1631.

4. **shew'th.** Note the rhyme, indicating the old pronunciation of ‘shew.’
5. Referring to his youthful appearance.
7. **inward ripeness.** Not that he predicates this of himself; but refers to the quality of inward ripeness, less in himself, that indueth more timely-happy spirits.
8. **timely-happy.** Happy in their timeliness, *i. e.*, happy in that their development is in accordance with their time of life.



9. *it*. inward ripeness, or life.

10. *or soon or slow*. Either soon or slow. 'Or . . . or' for 'either . . . or' is a Latinism.

13-14. These lines are more difficult than the commentators indicate. Browne takes 'is' to be in antithesis to 'shall be' (l. 10), and 'all' to mean 'all my life.' Keightley, admitting the obscurity, suggests: 'All depends upon my employing it as feeling myself to be under the eyes of my great Task-Master.' I suggest: 'All (any lot) is as ever in my great Task-Master's eye—if I but have grace to use it so (as if it were so); *i. e.*, all lots in life are the same to God, if I but do as He would.'

#### WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY.

1642.

This title (the date 1642 is crossed out) is in the Cambridge MS. and replaces a crossed-out title: 'On his dore when y<sup>e</sup> Citty expected an assault.' The assault was expected after the battle of Edgehill (1642), when the King advanced toward London. After the 13th of November the danger was over. There is no means of knowing whether or not the sonnet was actually placed upon the door; but the weight of common sense would incline toward considering the original title a figure of speech.

1. *colonel*. Trisyllabic here. *Cf.* Dict.

3. This is the reading of 1645 and of the MS. The 1673 reading is:

'If deed of honour did thee ever please.'

5. *charms*. Charms of magic.

10. Alexander the Great. Emathia was a part of Macedon. The incident referred to was after the capture of Thebes (B. C. 333).

13. *sad Electra's poet*. Euripides,—one of Milton's favorite authors. 'Sad' modifies Electra. This incident,

the singing of a chorus from the Electra, occurred after the taking of Athens by Lysander (B. C. 404). The conquerors were moved to spare part of the city.

TO A VIRTUOUS YOUNG LADY. Probably 1644.

The title is that of the editors; Milton gave the sonnet no title. The lady has not been identified.

2. *Cf. Matt. vii. 13.* 'Green' is Milton's own embellishment.

4. **hill of heavenly truth.** Symbolical, not scriptural. Keightley refers to Hesiod's hill of virtue.

5. *Cf. Luke x. 42; Ruth i. 16.*

10. *Cf. Matt. xxv. 1-12.*

11. *Cf. Rom. v. 5.*

TO THE LADY MARGARET LEY. Probably 1644. Printed in the 1645 volume.

Milton's nephew, Phillips, tells us that after the poet was deserted by his first wife (Mary Powell) he 'made it his chief diversion now and then of an evening to visit the Lady Margaret Ley. This lady, being a woman of great wit and ingenuity, had a particular honour for him, and took much delight in his company, as likewise Captain Hobson, her husband; a very accomplished gentleman' (quoted from Masson, *Milton's Poetical Works* i. 214).

1. **that good Earl.** James Ley, first Earl of Marlborough; Lord High Treasurer, 1624; President of the Council, 1628.

5. **that Parliament.** The third of Charles I., which was dissolved March, 1628-9. Its dissolution was 'sad' enough to those who had constitutional liberty at heart. It is not established that Marlborough's death, four days later, was caused by grief at the situation.

6. **dishonest.** inglorious.

7. **Chæroneæ.** The battle in which Philip of Macedon conquered the Athenians and Thebans, B. C. 338.

8. **that old man eloquent.** The Athenian orator, Isocrates, who died soon after hearing the tidings of defeat. Milton's *Areopagitica* derives its title from the 'Areopagitic Discourse' of Isocrates (Verity).

9. **Though later born.** Milton was twenty when the Earl died.

#### ON THE DETRACTION, etc. Probably 1645.

In the 1673 edition this and the following sonnet appear in the order here given. In the Cambridge MS., however, the order is reversed.

1. **Tetrachordon.** Four-chorded. Milton gave this name to that one of his treatises on divorce which discussed 'the four chief places in Scripture which treat of marriage or nullities in marriage.' (1645.)

4. **Numbering.** Among those who read it.

5. **stall-reader.** One who stands at the book-stall and reads (often reading a book through without purchasing it).

7. **Mile-End Green.** Near Whitechapel, London.

8. Scotch names, since many of the Scotch Presbyterians must have been opposed to his doctrine of divorce, may have sounded especially uncouth to Milton in these days. Gordon, according to Masson, was probably George, Lord Gordon, an adherent of Montrose at this time; and, according to the same authority, Colkitto, Macdonnel, and Galasp (Gillespie) may have been names of one person, Alexander Macdonald, son of Colkitto, son of Gillespie,—Montrose's lieutenant-general.

10. **our like mouths.** Mouths like ours (Keightley).

11. **Quintilian.** The great Latin rhetorician (d. 118 A. D.)

12. like ours. Thy age hated not, as ours does hate, etc.

**Sir John Cheke.** 1514-1557. The first Greek professor in Cambridge; the tutor of Edward VI. Masson refers to the fact that Cheke had been a member of a commission which had proposed greater freedom in divorce laws.

ON THE SAME. Probably 1645.

6. As Keightley points out, 'it was at the goddess herself, not at her unborn progeny, that they railed.' Latona was the mother of Apollo and Artemis, deities of the sun and moon, respectively. The rustics who jeered at her were changed into frogs.

8. *Cf. Matt.* vii. 6.

10. *Cf. John* viii. 32.

13. **rove.** Apart from the simpler meaning of 'miss' ('rove from'), the word 'rove' has a technical meaning in archery, 'to shoot at a mark while allowing for the wind.'

14. **For.** In spite of. The line refers to the civil war.

ON THE NEW FORCERS OF CONSCIENCE UNDER THE  
LONG PARLIAMENT. Probably 1646.

The Cambridge MS. in two places directs this to be placed after the two sonnets on divorce. One of these directions has been erased. In 1673 the poem appeared apart from the sonnets.

In form this poem is a sonnet with six lines added. The form was used by the Italians occasionally, and was called *Sonetto Codato* ('Tailed Sonnet,' as Masson translates it). Although not a sonnet, strictly speaking, according to the English notion, it may be grouped with Milton's sonnets for three reasons: its subject, the fact that it was a variant of the Italian sonnet form, and the fact that its first fourteen lines would in rhyme-formula be accepted as

a good sonnet in English. In this poem Milton denounces those who, having suppressed episcopacy, are now guilty of the very things that made the former system oppressive.

1. **thrown off your Prelate Lord.** Prelacy or episcopacy was formally abolished in 1646.

2. **renounced his Liturgy.** The liturgy was prohibited in 1644-5.

3. To be as corrupt as your predecessors, in holding more than one office or position, in order to gain money or influence. Because the prelate lord was thrown off, plurality was 'widowed.'

5. **for this.** For the sake of this gain.

6. The episcopal hierarchy had given way only to be followed by a hierarchy as bad,—that of the classis, or Presbytery. 'Classic' has therefore only an ecclesiastical meaning.

8. **A. S.** Adam Steuart, who published some strict Presbyterian pamphlets, using his initials instead of his name. (Samuel) Rutherford, a Scotch minister in the Westminster Assembly, was also a writer of pamphlets.

12. **Edwards.** Thomas Edwards, who, in a treatise called *Gangræna*, denounced as a heretic, Milton, among others.

**What-d'ye-call.** The guesses concerning this Scotchman (Milton is as bitter as Dr. Johnson toward the Scotch) seem to hit rather frequently Gillespie of the first Tetra-chordon sonnet.

14. Not only were these Presbyterians, in Milton's opinion, worse than the Anglicans, they were worse than even the Roman Catholics; the Westminster Assembly was worse than the Council of Trent. 'Packing' is a term still in political and legal use: a convention or jury may be packed.

16. **Clip your phylacteries.** Cf. *Matthew* xxiii. 5. Cut down your pretensions, though leaving your ears. The

MS. first gave the line: 'Crop ye as close as marginal P—s eares.' P is Prynne, a pamphleteer who, among other punishments, had had his ears cut off by Laud's followers. The Pharisaic pride will be cut down, the ears (unlike Prynne's) may be left. Possibly 'your ears' may be the subject instead of object of 'balk.' The fierceness of the controversy shows herein, that Milton, an anti-prelacy man, could thus so sneeringly refer to the injury received by some one else in the cause of anti-prelacy, when that some one else now opposed, as a Presbyterian, the Independency that was so vital to Milton.

20. The line expresses, as Milton intended, a double meaning. As a matter of etymology, and of opinion, presbyter and priest were the same word and the same thing, save only that the poet thought the seeming improvement a greater abuse than the original.

## TO MR. H. LAWES, ON HIS AIRS. 1646.

This sonnet first appeared prefixed to a volume called *Choice Psalms, put into Musick for three Voices: composed by Henry and William Lawes, Brothers, and Servants to his Majestie: 1648*. Lawes, who composed the music of *Comus*, and acted the part of the Attendant Spirit, was one of Milton's friends, so good a one, indeed, that in the strenuous days of 1646, the Royalist Lawes and the Puritan Milton could still exchange these fine courtesies. Lawes's setting of songs was very pleasing to the poets, for the composer seemed anxious, as the sonnet indicates, to fit his music to the words, rather than to subordinate the words to the music. Milton's comments on music must be regarded as weightier than those of most poets.

4. King **Midas**, serving as judge in a musical contest between Pan and Apollo, decided in favor of Pan. Thereupon Apollo changed his judge's uncritical ears into asses' ears.

**Committing short and long.** Matching short notes to long sounds, and vice versa.

5. Again the double subject and singular verb. *Cf. Ps. cxiv. 6.* and *Lycidas 7.*

11. **story.** Lawes had set to music the story of Ariadne, by Cartwright. (Warton.)

12. **Dante met in purgatory Casella** the musician, who, being entreated to sing a love-song, sang one of Dante's own. *Purg. II.*

14. **milder.** Than those of hell.

ON THE RELIGIOUS MEMORY OF MRS. CATHARINE THOMSON, MY CHRISTIAN FRIEND, DECEASED 16 DECEMBER, 1646.

Nothing is known of the woman to whose memory this sonnet is dedicated. The fact that in 1649 Milton 'lodged at one Thomson's' (Phillips) is a clue too slight to follow. 'Scripture texts in Milton's mind in the Sonnet are *Rom. vii. 24, Rev. xiv. 13, Acts x. 4, Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9.*' (Masson).

ON THE LORD GENERAL FAIRFAX AT THE SIEGE OF COLCHESTER. 1648. First published posthumously, in Phillips's Life, 1694.

Colchester was besieged in the summer of 1648, and this dates the sonnet for us. Fairfax (1612-1671) did not accomplish the greater things that Milton here points the way to: his retirement to private life (1650) left the great opportunity to Cromwell. But Milton continued in his esteem for Fairfax, as a passage in the *Defensio Secunda* (1654) shows.

5. **virtue.** In the Latin sense of bravery. Phillips printed 'valour.'

6. **new rebellions.** In this year (1648) the Royalists made a fresh attempt to gain the upper hand.'

7. **Hydra heads.** It was one of the labors of Hercules, to kill the Lernean hydra, a nine-headed dragon. As soon as one head was cut off, two new ones grew in its place.

**false north.** A Scottish expedition against the Parliament was made at this time to help the English Royalists.

8. **broken league.** The Solemn League and Covenant (1643) was broken, according to Milton, by the Scots, who held, for their part, that it had been broken by the English.

**imp.** To repair a broken feather in the hawk's wing, by piecing it out.

12-13. Milton felt that in the Parliament were those who used their high station for personal ends. His sympathies at this time were all for the Army as against the Parliament.

TO THE LORD GENERAL CROMWELL, MAY, 1652, ON  
THE PROPOSALS OF CERTAIN MINISTERS AT THE  
COMMITTEE FOR PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL.  
First printed by Phillips in 1694.

This sonnet is not so much an effort to characterize a great man as it is an appeal to that great man at a specific time. The situation that called forth the sonnet was this: the Parliamentary Committee referred to in the title had received from 'certain ministers' proposals to continue the church establishment through the public support of the clergy. Cromwell was on this Committee, and of course the most powerful of its members. To him, Milton, who ardently desired the separation of church and state, made this appeal, splendid and unheeded; for Cromwell, Independent as he was, supported the Establishment.

2. **detractions rude.** Not those of his Royalist enemies, but those of the Presbyterian party, to whom Cromwell's Independency was most hateful.



5. **crowned.** In this word some of the commentators have seen an explicit reference to King Charles. The Royalist cause is probably near enough to the meaning.

7. **Darwen stream** is in Lancashire, near Preston, where in 1648 Cromwell defeated the Scottish invaders under Hamilton.

8. **Dunbar** was the scene of Cromwell's defeat of the Scottish army under Leslie in 1650.

9. **Worcester, 1651**, saw the defeat of Charles,—Cromwell's 'crowning mercy.'

For 'Worcester's laureate wreath,' the MS. originally read 'twenty battles more'; but this expression was erased to give way to its better substitute.

12. **secular chains.** The state's possible control of religion.

14. Milton did not believe in paying for the performance of religious duties. His ideal was probably the voluntary ministrations of a man who needed no support beyond what he earned in other things. For a man to accept large remuneration for spiritual services was repugnant to one of Milton's stern, intense religious feelings.

The last clause of the line gives its sense more readily when inverted: 'whose maw is their gospel.'

#### TO SIR HENRY VANE THE YOUNGER. 1652.

First printed in 1662 in a *Life of Sir Henry Vane* by George Sikes (Masson). Phillips also prints it.

The younger Vane (whose brief residence in America adds to our interest in the sonnet) held views concerning church and state that met with Milton's approval. The tone of the sonnet is therefore more assured than is that of the sonnet to Cromwell; this is approbation of something done, that is a plea for action. In both sonnets is revealed the highest admiration of personal power.

3. **gowns, not arms.** Milton celebrates the power of counsel, as in the previous sonnet he had praised military prowess.

4. **Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, twice invaded Italy in the third century, B. C.** It was towards the end of the same century that Hannibal began his wars against Rome.

6. **Warburton suggested that the 'hollow states' meant Holland, the States General.**

**spelled.** Explained. *Cf.* also *Il Pens.* 170, note, p. 217.

11. **which few have done.** Milton may have been doubtful as to whether Cromwell could be counted among the few.

12. **either sword.** The sword of the state and the sword of the church, their proper power.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEMONT. 1655.

As Latin Secretary, Milton had drafted Cromwell's indignant and effective protest against the atrocities which the Vaudois were being made to endure. The Duke of Savoy had ordered these Protestants to become Roman Catholics, or leave their homes—their property confiscated. They resisted, and an army was sent against them to kill and plunder. This religious butchery aroused the deepest indignation in England. Milton's sonnet is the expression of a feeling too intense to find relief even in penning Cromwell's peremptory message to the Duke.

3. **who kept thy faith so pure of old.** The Vaudois, or Waldenses, originated as a sect long before the Reformation. They were the followers of Peter Waldo (hence Waldenses) of Lyons, but they had been forced out of Southern France and had established themselves in the Canton Vaud (hence Vaudois). It was thought by many that their form of Christianity was derived unbroken from the Apostles. In the next line Milton refers to this belief.

12. **The triple Tyrant.** The Pope; triple referring to his triple crown, or tiara.

14. **the Babylonian woe.** The Roman Church: so the Puritans interpreted Revelations (xvii., xviii.).

#### ON HIS BLINDNESS.

Date uncertain, but after 1652, of course. It followed the *Piemont sonnet* (1655) in the edition of 1673.

2. **ere half my days.** Milton was at least forty-three (at which age his blindness became complete) when these words were written; more than half of the scriptural three score and ten years had therefore passed. It is easily possible that he was thinking of his mature days, not counting in his reckoning the years of childhood.

3. **one talent.** Cf. *Matt.* xv. 14-30.

7. Cf. *John* xi. 1-4.

8. **fondly.** Foolishly. Cf. *Il Penseroso* 6, note, p. 209; *Lycidas* 56.

12. **thousands.** Of angels. Spenser's *Hymn to Heavenly Love* (66-68) speaks of angels ready

'Either with nimble wings to cut the skies  
When he them on his messages doth send,  
Or on his own dear presence to attend.'

TO MR. LAWRENCE. Probably near 1655.

The date is uncertain; in the edition of 1673 the sonnet follows the one *On His Blindness*. Masson quotes Phillips to the effect that when Milton lived in Westminster (1652-1660), among his friends was 'Young Lawrence (the son of him that was President of Oliver's Council), to whom there is a Sonnet among the rest in his printed Poems.' This leaves us in doubt as to which of Henry Lawrence's sons is meant,—Edward, who died in 1657, æt. 24, or Henry, the younger brother, who outlived the poet. The commentators who feel that the cheerful tone of the sonnet

indicates a date previous to Milton's blindness are basing their conclusions upon a too rigid theory. Must we suppose that after he became blind Milton never had a cheerful moment? The sonnet gives us a very pleasant glimpse of the mature man's friendship with the young man who won this immortality of praise.

1. **of virtuous father.** A prominent Parliament man, who in 1654 was made President of the Council of State. Later, in 1657, he became a member of the House of Lords. The turn of expression undoubtedly follows Horace's *O matre pulchra filia pulchrior*.

4-5. Gaining from the hard season what may be won.

6. **Favonius.** Another name for Zephyrus, the west wind.

8. *Cf. Matt.* vi. 28.

10. **Attic.** Here a synonym of 'refined,' 'delicate.'

12. **Tuscan air.** Verity reminds us that Milton while in Italy 'purchased a quantity of Italian music and shipped it home from Venice.' *Cf. Masson's Life* I. 831.

13-14. **spare to interpose them oft.** Refrain from too frequent indulgence in these pleasures. Note the value of 'interpose': delights placed in between weightier things, as if of purely secondary importance.

#### TO CYRIACK SKINNER.

Date uncertain. The reference to the Swede and the French is of no service in fixing the time, for they 'intended' things after as well as before the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Cyriack Skinner was a frequent visitor at Milton's house, we are told by Phillips; a man older than Lawrence of the preceding sonnet, and seemingly one of more solid achievement and intellectual maturity. Lawrence one fancies to have been a man of artistic tastes, Skinner a vigorous thinker. The two sonnets differ delicately in tone; the slight note of warning in the first—not

too frequently to interpose delights—becomes in the second a gentle remonstrance against too strenuous work.

1. **grandsire.** Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634), the famous jurist, member of Parliament, and opponent of the Stuarts, was the maternal grandfather of Cyriack Skinner.

2. **Themis**, usually accounted to be the goddess of law, is also referred to by Milton (*P. L.* xi. 14) as presiding over the oracle at Delphi. 'British Themis' may therefore be a figurative expression, not for British law, but for the British oracle, or court of final appeal.

3. **his volumes.** Among them, the 'Reports,' and 'Institutes.'

7. Indicating obviously the nature of Skinner's studies.

8. **intends.** The 1673 reading, followed by Masson, is 'intend.' 'Intends,' the more usual reading, has the authority of the MS. (amanuensis hand).

The line has a Horatian reminiscence in it (*Od.* II. ii.).

12. **that care . . . show.** The kind of care that seems wise.

14. **refrains** from enjoying it.

TO THE SAME. 1655, in all probability.

1. **this three year's day.** 1652 is the year during which Milton became completely blind.

**though clear**, etc. In the *Defensio Secunda* (1654) Milton had previously spoken of the same thing: though blind, his eyes were not changed in appearance.

10. **conscience.** Consciousness. Milton does not use the word 'consciousness' in his verse; nor does Shakespeare.

11. **In Liberty's defence.** The *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* was written in full knowledge that persistent application to his task would bring to the writer more speedily the blindness that was perhaps inevitable; but Milton did not falter in what he conceived to be his duty.

12. **talks.** The usual (and unwarranted) reading is

'rings,'—a change made by Phillips, although the MS. (*amanuensis*) gives 'talks.' Phillips has been followed by a long line of editors (among them: Todd, Brydges, Mitford, Keightley, Masson—with a qualm of conscience, Browne, Rolfe). It is a pleasure to help to restore the true reading. 'Talks' is a word in better taste and gives the line a dignity and reserve strength that are very grateful as a substitute for the picturesque self-praise of the line as usually printed and quoted. The first line of the sonnet to Fairfax, frequently quoted in connection with the line in question, does not affect the matter, although it may possibly have been in Phillips' ears when he made his unauthorized alteration. Verity has 'talks.'

13. *vain mask*. Cf. *Ps. xxxix. 6*. Mask as in 'Comus, a Mask'; here used figuratively for the 'vain shew' of the world.

#### ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

Catharine Woodcock, Milton's second wife, died in February, 1657-8. The sonnet then belongs without much question in the year 1658. The fact that Milton never saw his wife makes peculiarly poignant those images that express his vision of her.

2. *Alcestis*, the wife of King Admetus, was brought back from death by Hercules, 'Jove's great son.' The story is the subject of one of the most beautiful of Greek tragedies, the *Alcestis* of Euripides. Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure* contains a spirited translation of the tragedy.

6. Cf. *Leviticus xii*.

#### THE FIFTH ODE OF HORACE.

Date uncertain; probably after 1645, as it does not appear in the 1645 edition. Printed in the 1673 edition, immediately after the Sonnets. The Latin original was also printed, as if Milton felt very sure that his translation

was good,—as it is. The word 'English'd' occurs in the table of contents; the rest of the title in the body of the book is as here given. The words 'according to the Latin measure' cannot be taken literally, even in connection with the qualifying clause that follows them.

#### SAMSON AGONISTES.

*Samson Agonistes* was published, in the same volume with *Paradise Regained*, in 1671. The exact date of its composition is not known; but without much doubt it was after 1667 (the date of publication of *Paradise Lost*). In July, 1670, the poem was licensed to be printed.

Nearly thirty years before, Milton had thought of the story of Samson as a possible subject for dramatic treatment. The Cambridge MS. contains a long list of titles (drawn up probably about 1641-2), among which appear,— 'Samson pursophorus\* or Hybristes, or Samson marriing or in Ramath Lechi Jud. 15'; and on the next line,— 'Dagonalia. Jud. 16.' Masson takes these to be two subjects; Verity suggests either four or five. The MS. shows that 'Samson in Ramath Lechi' and 'Dagonalia' were the original entries; the words 'marriing or' were then inserted: and then, either as two titles or as one, 'Samson pursophorus or Hybristes' (violent). Many other scriptural subjects, suited to dramatic treatment, were also noted by Milton at this time, but when the opportunity came it is easy to see why he chose as his tragic subject the blind Samson struggling against his persecutors. 'Agonistes' means an athlete or wrestler who strives for

\* Verity's supposition that this word may be purgophorus is untenable. The fourth letter looks a little like a careless modern *g*, but is exactly like Milton's *s*, and not at all like Milton's *g*, letters that appear frequently on the same page. 'Purgophorus' would mean 'tower-bearing,' and 'would refer to Samson's carrying away the gates of Gaza.' But Milton would not call a gate a tower. 'Pursophorus' means a 'fire-brand bringer,' a clear reference to *Judges xv. 4-5*.

victory,—a reference to Samson's share in the games at the Philistine feast (Dagonalia).

The original title-page bears (both in Greek and Latin), a few words from Aristotle's famous definition of tragedy: 'the imitation of a serious action . . . through pity and fear purging the mind of those and such like emotions' (to give Milton's interpretation of the much controverted sentence). Cf. note to Preface, l. 4, p. 280.

Two things are necessary in preparation for the study of this drama: thorough familiarity with the scriptural narrative (*Judges* xiii.-xvi.), and some knowledge of the construction of a Greek tragedy. This knowledge may be best attained by reading parts of Aristotle's *Poetics* (Chapters VI.-XVIII.), Professor Butcher's *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (Chapters II., and VI.-IX.); and several Greek plays,—Æschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Œdipus Coloneus*, Euripides' *Alcestis*, for example. Barnett's *Primer of Greek Drama* is of service. Briefly, it may be noted that a Greek tragedy involves a chorus, before whom the action takes place, and who join in the action. The presence of the chorus limits in the following ways the treatment of the subject: only such things may be uttered as the chorus may hear; only so much may be presented as would be consistent with the continued presence of the chorus. This means that the prolonged development of a story is impossible, for it is out of the question to imagine the chorus remaining in one place, before one's eyes, for more than a few hours; and this, therefore, means that only the culmination of the action may be presented. And this culmination, too, must be treated with reference to the presence of the chorus; that is, if the chorus be friendly to the hero, for instance, no intriguing against him can go on, for the chorus, naturally, would defeat the intrigue. (It should be added, that the Greek drama permits a speech or dialogue before the chorus enters. That which



precedes the entry of the chorus is called the prologue.) To illustrate the main point: *Samson Agonistes* would be a very different drama if the chorus were Philistines instead of Hebrews. The outcome would be the same, but the course of the play would depend upon the presence of the hostile element. Naturally the dramatist will choose for his chorus those persons in whose presence the hero may most completely reveal his characteristics; and as a rule friends, rather than enemies, will meet this need. Instead of dramatizing, then, such events in the entire story of Samson as seemed to the poet most significant,—and this would have been Shakespeare's way,—Milton takes the culmination of the story, provides a chorus friendly to Samson, and presents in brief action only that aspect of the crisis which the chorus might reasonably see. This chorus, it should be noted, has a real share in the plot: its odes spring from the immediate occasion and are not perfunctory, or unrelated to the situation, as they sometimes are even in Greek tragedy.

It may be added, that it is the presence of the chorus, rather than any well-defined æsthetic theories, that determines the form of Greek tragedy. The French classic dramatists adopted certain points in Greek tragedy, without having specific need for them, and then sought to find for them fundamental æsthetic principles. The classic French theory of dramatic art is therefore partly invalid. The English romantic drama, whose form grew out of actual needs, is a more natural form of art. English imitations of classical drama may have much literary interest, but as drama they have no real place. *Samson Agonistes* is a splendid dramatic poem, possessing intense literary interest, but, as perhaps none knew better than Milton, it is not an English play. For other poetic dramas of the Greek type, in English, the student may be referred to Matthew Arnold's *Merope*, and Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*.

The source of the drama is, of course, the Biblical narrative. Slight debts to Josephus, and to Sandys's *Travels* (1615) are pointed out by Verity. The fact that the Dutch poet, Vondel, had written a drama, *Samson* (published 1660), is no evidence that Milton was influenced by it. Milton may have read it, in any event doubtless knew of it; but inasmuch as years before, he had contemplated a classic drama on this very subject, he could not have been indebted to Vondel for the conception of the drama. His indebtedness, if it exists, must be therefore a matter of construction and of detail. It would do no harm to Milton's fame if it could be shown that Milton drew from the Dutch poet as directly as Shakespeare drew from his sources; but this, it seems, cannot be fully established. Such internal similarities as exist are as easily explicable by accident as by purpose. In brief, then, two writers have used the same subject, each to the best of his ability; the younger may have gained something from the older, or may have gained nothing, and in either case remains independent. No one, surely, can believe that Milton stole the product of another man's brain, concealing the theft. If we should some day discover a letter of Milton's saying, 'I planned *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* upon the *Lucifer* and *Samson* of Vondel,' we should merely be in possession of an extremely interesting piece of information which would not affect the intrinsic quality of Milton's poems nor impair our faith in his essential originality.

## MILTON'S PREFACE.

1. **anciently.** Among the Greeks and Romans.
2. **of all other.** A classic construction, which does not appeal to our ears as logical.
3. **said by Aristotle.** *Poetics* vi. 2.

4. **pity and fear.** δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιοῦτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν: literally, 'by pity and fear, effecting the purging of these passions.' The difficult point is whether Aristotle meant precisely that the mind should be purged of (rid of) such passions,—the mind being thereby purified; or that the mind should be purified by means of these passions. Milton, as his translation shows, accepts the former interpretation, without regarding the 'purging' as complete. The fuller definition, in Butcher's translation, runs: 'Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.' Cf. Butcher's *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, Chap. II. and VI.

9. **for so, in physic.** The homœopathic principle, *similia similibus curantur*, afterwards elaborated by Hahnemann (1755-1843).

**melancholic hue and quality.** Melancholy is, literally, 'black bile.'

15. **verse of Euripides.** 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.' Sometimes assigned to Menander.

16. **Paræus.** A German Calvinist theologian (1548-1622).

21. **Dionysius.** B. C. ca. 430-367. Tyrant of Syracuse. A tragedy of his obtained a prize at the Lenæa (the winter festival at Athens).

23. **Augustus Cæsar.** B. C. 63-A. D. 14. The first Roman emperor, who declared (according to Suetonius) that his tragedy of *Ajax* had committed suicide by falling on a sponge.

25. **Seneca.** Died A. D. 65. The tutor of Nero, and usually credited with the authorship of ten dramas now extant. The influence of Senecan tragedy was very great in France, and less great, though marked, in England,

27. **Gregory Nazianzen.** Bishop of Constantinople in the fourth century. It is not certain that Gregory wrote the *Christus Patiens*, but whether written by Gregory or Apollinarius the elder, or in the twelfth century, the play, which is based on Euripides, seems to have been regarded as the earliest Christian drama.

32. **at this day.** The drama of the Restoration exemplified all that Milton held in peculiar detestation. Its low tone (both moral and literary) might readily enough have made Milton feel that all drama suffered from the reputation of the contemporary stage; and that an apology was in place for a Puritan who should write even a scriptural tragedy.

33. **interludes.** An interlude proper is a kind of drama that was in vogue before comedy arose in England. It has comparatively little plot, but deals with real persons. Its name indicates that it was performed as a part of an entertainment. *The Four PP* is a well-known interlude. But the word acquired a broader use, and Milton uses it here in the sense, presumably, of a comic play.

34. **the poet's error.** As a rule, the Greeks kept their tragedy consistently tragic, and did not introduce comic scenes, or even speeches, into serious plays. Sir Philip Sidney objected to the Elizabethan 'mongrel tragi-comedy.' Into this 'poet's error' Shakespeare constantly fell, much to the delight of most of us. Milton must be held to include Shakespeare in his condemnation,—a fairly good proof of Milton's austerity and lack of humor.

38. **no prologue.** That is, in the sense of a prologue detached from the play. Greek drama used a prologue, which was, however, only the technical name of the first speech or speeches delivered before the chorus entered: the speeches were really part of the play. Latin comedy made use of the prologue, in Milton's sense.

40. **Martial.** A. D. 43-104. A Latin writer of epigrams, who prefixed 'epistles to his readers' to his books of

epigrams. Milton has his scholarly apology even for using a preface.

45. **still in use.** The Renaissance made Italy acquainted with the classic forms, and the chorus was used in a number of dramas of the sixteenth century, a tendency no doubt encouraged by the revival of classical plays. Verity and Percival note a scriptural drama (with chorus), *Adamo*, written by Giovanni Andreini, a contemporary of Milton.

49. **Monostrophic, etc.** Milton enters here into a metrical explanation,—scholarly, as usual. The odes of the Greek chorus contained three divisions: the strophe, as the chorus moved from right to left in the orchestra; the antistrophe, as they turned back; the epode, as they stood still, after the return. Inasmuch as this division depended on the music to be sung, and as the present chorus is not to sing, Milton disregards the triple construction, and writes his odes in but one general strophe or stanza ('monostrophic'); but as this single strophe is not regular, he will call it 'apolelymenon' (freed from restraints); or, since some of these odes may be subdivided into irregular 'stanzas or pauses,' 'allœostropha' (irregular strophes) may serve as a name for this form of the choral odes.

58. **It suffices.** Horace, *Ars Poetica* 189, places five acts as the limit. A serious play seems to involve five stages of development (the introduction, the rising action, the climax, the falling action, the catastrophe), each of which may, appropriately enough, fill an act; but Shakespeare, for example, although adhering to the five-act scheme, does not make his separate acts correspond to this development. Freytag's *Technique of the Drama* elucidates many difficult points in dramatic construction.

59. **uniformity.** Verity suggests Aristotle's requirement of consistency in character portrayal (*Poet.* xv. 4); but in view of what Milton has just said against mixing serious and comic elements, I think that 'uniformity' must refer to tone,—a keeping in the same key throughout.

60. **intricate or explicit.** Complex or simple: Aristotle's division of plots (*Poet.* x.) An intricate plot is one which the 'change of fortune' is brought about by the recoil of the action (*περιπέτεια*) or by recognition, or by both. The recoil is defined as 'a change by which a train of action produces the opposite of the effect intended'; recognition is 'a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune.' (Butcher, tr.) The turn, or recoil, in the plot of *Samson Agonistes* may be placed in the speech (1381-1389) in which Samson unexpectedly announces his determination to go with the messenger. Inasmuch as this resolve is not the thing to which the previous action has seemed to tend; and inasmuch as this resolve helps to bring about the change of fortune, (Samson's death in triumph following his life in chains), we may count the plot 'intricate.'

63. **decorum.** Not decorousness, in the sense of good manners, but stage decorum; that which fitted the needs of this form of art.

### THE ARGUMENT.

The argument, or brief synopsis, of the drama, is prefixed to *Samson Agonistes* after the manner of the Greek plays as they have come down to us. These arguments were written by grammarians (some of whom are known to us) of widely separated times. Some of the arguments were written a century or two before the Christian era, others in the Middle Ages. Note the compactness of expression, wherein Milton is following the classical lead.

The action of the drama is based on the incidents narrated in ten verses of the scriptural account (*Judges* xvi. 21-30). For convenience of reference, the passage is here given:

21. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes,

and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

22. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

23. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

24. And when the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

25. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

26. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

27. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

28. And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

13. which yet more troubles him. In addition to his sorrow over his condition, he must suffer the ignominy of having his enemies exult over him; and this meant the triumph of the god of the Philistines.

28. and by accident to himself. But v. 30 (*Judges* xvi.): 'And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines.'

### THE PERSONS.

**Manoa.** So in the original edition; the usual spelling, 'Manoah,' more accurately represents the Hebrew. The word is printed eight times in the 1671 edition, and is spelled 'Manoah' only once.

**Dalila.** In pronunciation Milton follows the cadence of the Hebrew (Dalida); hence throughout the play *Dal-ila*, not *Da-li-la*.

**Danites.** Descendants of Dan. Manoa was a Danite (*Judges* xiii. 2).

### THE DRAMA.

The opening situation,—the blind Samson led in by a guide,—resembles, as has been pointed out by Newton and by Richardson, the opening scene of the *Œdipus Colonneus* of Sophocles (where the blind Œdipus is led in by Antigone), and the situation in the *Phænissæ* of Euripides, where the blind Tiresias says to his daughter, 'Lead on a little, daughter, be an eye for my dark step' (v. 834).

2. these. My.

4. There I am wont to sit. Of more personal interest than any resemblance of situation or diction to Sophocles or Euripides is the resemblance to Milton's own habit of his later years. Masson quotes from Jonathan Richardson (1734): 'I have heard many years since, that he used to sit in a grey coarse cloth coat at the door of his house near Bunhill Fields, without Moorgate, in warm sunny weather, to enjoy the fresh air, and so, as well as in his



room, received the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality.'

5. **task of servile toil.** 'And he did grind in the prison house.' *Judges* xvi. 21. *Cf.* l. 35.

6. The scansion of this line assumes an elision in 'daily in.'

8. **imprisoned also.** Landor (in *Imaginary Conversations*, Southey and Landor, II.) has objected to this fancy, as a mere 'prettiness.' In regard to this and many other 'pathetic fallacies,' it may be said that under powerful emotion inanimate objects may be spoken of in terms that might be mere 'conceits' were they uttered in cold blood. Thus Samson, feeling intensely his confinement, thinks of the close damp air as imprisoned, too. A mere describer of a prison, seeking a neat word, might hit upon the same expression, and using it without real feeling, justly incur Landor's charge of 'prettiness.'

11. **day spring.** *Cf.* *Job* xxxviii. 12.

**here leave me.** From here to l. 110 we may imagine Samson alone.

13. **Dagon.** The god of the Philistines, whom Milton describes in the first book of *Paradise Lost* (462) as 'sea-monster, upward man And downward fish . . . dreaded through the coast Of Palestine . . . and Gaza's frontier bounds.' Gaza was near the coast, and might easily believe in a marine deity; although it is not certain that the etymology of the word 'Dagon' indicates a fish-god, as Milton doubtless assumed. *Cf.* *Nativ.* 199, and note on same, p. 191.

16. **popular noise.** Noise made by the populace.

20. **no sooner found alone.** The sense is obvious, but the construction is so compact as to be difficult: upon me no sooner found alone but (they) rush thronging.

24. **twice.** Once to the unnamed mother of Samson, and again to her and Manoa. *Judges* xiii. 3 and 9-11.

25. **ascended.** *Judges* xiii. 20.

28. and from some great act . . . revealed. And (as from the revelation of some, etc. For the construction of 'revealed,' cf. *Comus* 48, and note, p. 227.

31. separate to God. *Judges* xiii. 5. Those who took the vow of Nazarites were 'separate to God.' Cf. *Numbers* vi. Further references to the scriptural narrative will not be noted, except to clear up difficulties.

33. captived. The accent may have fallen on the second syllable, as it does in Spenser, *F. Q.* ii. 4, 16, but the modern ear is not offended by the modern accentuation of the word in the line.

39. deliver. 'Begin to deliver' was the promise of the angel.

41. Landor, not without good reason, would punctuate:

'Eyeless, in Gaza, at the mill, with slaves,'

47. this high gift. Object of 'keep.'

48. Nor could I keep under the seal of silence in what part my strength was lodged, and how easily it might be bereft from me.

55. secure. Care-less.

56. weakest subtleties. Strength is never so ignominious as when defeated by small trickery; there is no such disgrace in strength overcome by strength. Keightley takes 'weakest subtleties' to mean 'women'!

70. prime. First. *Gen.* i. 3.

extinct. Extinguished.

77. still. Always, ever.

81. The line may be scanned, as by Bridges:

'I'rre | co'vera | bly da'rk | to'tal | ecli'pse,"

or preferably, I think:

'Irreco'v | era | bly da'rk | to'tal | ecli'pse,"

the difference being merely as whether the first or second *e* in 'irrecoverably' shall be slurred. Preserving the

syllabic value of the second *e* gives a stronger roll to the word.

82. **without all.** Without any.

84. The line is without quotation marks in the 1671 edition. It would be possible, although not advisable, to read:

“Let there be light,” and light was over all.’

87. **silent.** The word may be the poet’s own metaphor for ‘dark,’ or Milton may have in mind the Latin *luna silens*, the moon at the time of conjunction, *i. e.*, when it is invisible.

89. **vacant.** Not ‘empty,’ for the moon is hid there, but where the moon may rest or have vacation. But perhaps, as Keightley suggests, it may mean ‘empty of light.’ ‘Interlunar’ is a peculiarly daring expression, because literally it means only ‘between moons,’—‘when the moon hides in her cave between moons’—but the tautology disappears under the strength of the adjective.

92. **light is in the soul.** *Cf. P. L.* iii. 51. With this part of Samson’s speech, *cf.* the magnificent introduction (1-55) to the third book of *Paradise Lost*.

93. **She all in every part.** A reference to the notion that the soul was diffused through every part of the body. Percival traces the idea from Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists, through the *Nosce Teipsum* of Sir John Davies, (1599) to Milton.

95. **obvious.** Exposed; literally, ‘in the way.’

106. **obnoxious.** Liable.

111. **many feet.** Greek drama used a chorus of twelve or more.

**steering.** Directing (themselves).

115. The metre of the choral odes is referred to in the last paragraph of the Appendix. This ode is not addressed to Samson, and is not heard by him save as a confused ‘sound of words’ (l. 176-7).

118. **at random.** Carelessly; as Percival suggests, 'anyhow.'

**diffused.** Several classical expressions have been found by commentators, beginning with Thyer, which would account for Milton's use of this word. In Elizabethan usage it might imply a negligence, as of dress.

120. **abandoned.** In 1671, 'abandon'd'; the final '-ed' is therefore not made a separate syllable.

122. **habit, weeds.** Dress, garments. The words are retained in present usage in 'riding habit,' 'widow's weeds.'

129. **embattled.** In line of battle. Cf. Emerson's

'Here once the embattled farmers stood.'

133. **Chalybean.** Made by the Chalybes, a people of Asia Minor, famous for their skill in working iron. The word permits here either pronunciation, Chalybean, or Chalybean; the latter the better, save that 'Adamantean' in the next time repeats the effect, and therefore Milton may have pronounced the word, 'Chalybean.'

134. **Adamantean proof.** Proof against adamant, or better, as if made of adamant and hence proof against anything not so hard. Adamant means an unconquerable substance, as a diamond or hardest steel (sometimes a magnet).

136. **insupportably.** That could not be supported or resisted by the enemy.

138. **Ascalonite.** Inhabitant of Askelon, one of the chief cities of the Philistines (*I Samuel* vi. 17).

139. **his lion ramp.** His spring like a lion's.

142. **what.** Whatever.

144. **foreskins.** Uncircumcised Philistines.

**fell.** One expects the thought to run: he slew a thousand, instead of, a thousand fell.

145. **Ramath-lechi.** 'The lifting up of the jawbone, or the casting away of the jawbone', is the marginal translation of the term in the King James version.

147. **Azza. Gaza.**

148. **Hebron.** The city of Anak's father, Arba (*Joshua* xv. 13). The sons of Anak were giants, 'which come of the giants' (*Numbers* xiii. 33).

149. **No journey of a Sabbath day.** The Mosaic injunction that no man should 'go out of his place on the seventh day' (*Exodus* xvi. 29) applied in strictness only to the manna gatherers; but, according to rabbinical tradition, was viewed as a part of the permanent law. In order to permit some necessary movement, the 'journey' allowable on the Sabbath was fixed at two thousand cubits, the distance of the holy tabernacle from the remotest part of the Israelitish camp in the wilderness (From MS. note of Professor M. Mielziner, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati). From Gaza to Hebron was about forty miles.

150. **Like whom. Atlas.**

157. The parenthesis may be paraphrased: a matter (namely, that the soul is imprisoned in the body) which men who enjoy sight often complain of without cause.

162. **inward light.** Cf. l. 92; also *P. L.* iii. 51.

165. **since man on earth.** Since man has been on earth.

172. **sphere.** The word has caused some difficulty. One of the attributes of Fortune is a wheel, indicative of change; perhaps Milton means this wheel. Masson recalls that Fortune stood on a rotating globe; Percival quotes Plutarch's reference to Fortune holding a sphere in her hand: neither of these spheres, others remark, could 'raise' a man. But it is probable that Milton is not pursuing the visual image very far; he doubtless says 'sphere of fortune' as a figure of speech for fortune itself.

181. **Eshtaol and Zora.** Towns in the 'camp of Dan' between which 'the spirit of the Lord began to move him [Samson] at times,' and between which he was buried. *Judges* xiii. 25, and xvi. 31.

182. **to visit or.** Caſton (a friend of the editor, Newton)

suggested that Milton dictated 'and'; a reading at least as good as that of the text.

if better. If it be better for thee, we are ready to bring, etc. Percival, on the other hand, takes it to mean: to see if we may better bring, etc.

189. These words on friendship evidently apply to Milton's own experience with the majority of his friends. As to the minority, Milton (as Verity says) 'had no cause to complain of want of loyalty in friends like Thomas Ellwood.'

195. Another mood from that portrayed in l. 66-7. But as Newton clearly pointed out, there is no real inconsistency: alone, Samson felt his blindness most; with friends, his disgrace.

197. heave. Lift.

205. Yet why? And why, or Yet why not? (Percival). The question does not ask what is in the people's minds to make them speak so, but what made Samson the subject of their thoughts and consequent utterances.

207. mean. Average.

210. wisest man. In choosing wives,—Milton remarked in *Tetrachordon*,—'the best and wisest men . . . do daily err.'

212. pretend they. Though they pretend to be. 'Pretend' may mean either 'intend' or 'feign'; the former would be more in the spirit of the context.

213. Deject. Only the participle 'dejected' has remained in use.

216. The same question that Samson's father and mother asked him (*Judges* xiv. 3).

219. Timna. Timnath.

220. Not my parents. But (it pleased) not. Not impossibly Milton thought of his own first marriage.

222. motioned. Proposed.

knew. Cf. *Judges* xiv. 4.

229. Sorec. *Judges* xvi. 4.

230. **accomplished snare.** Not meaning a deceitful woman possessing accomplishments, but, I, take it, one who was to accomplish the ensnaring. Thus Keats; of a man who was to be murdered:

'So the two brothers and their murdered man  
Rode past fair Florence.'—*Isabella*.

235. **peal.** Alone, the word might mean either a peal of bells or of artillery. In spite of the anachronism, the latter, because of the other martial images, seems meant.

238. **Philistines.** Accent on the first syllable in each of the ten cases in which Milton uses the word in the drama.

240. **Israel still serves.** Jortin, quoted by Todd, assumes a reference to England's slavery,—the re-acceptance of the Stuart rule.

247. **ambition.** Canvassing. Like the technical Latin meaning of going about (*ambitio*) seeking votes.

248. **though mute.** Cf. *Julius Cæsar* III. i. 260, and III. ii. 229.

253. **Etham.** *Judges* xv. 8, 11.

257. **harass.** A rare, perhaps unique (Percival), use of the word as a noun.

266. **Gath.** *I Samuel* vii. 14.

268-276. Milton could hardly have composed these lines without implying a reference to the England of his day.

273. **whom.** Masson sees a reference to Milton's own position after the Restoration, Dunster (quoted by Percival) to Lambert. But it seems at least as likely that Milton may have Cromwell in mind. Collins names Cromwell only.

278. **Succoth, Penuel.** Cities which refused bread to Gideon, who was in pursuit of Zebah and Zalmunna, Midianite kings, afterward vanquished by Gideon. *Judges* viii. 5-17.

281. **Madian.** Midian, a place near the head of the Red Sea.

282. **Ephraim.** The Ephraimites, who after Jephthah had conquered the Ammonites, turned against him. For the whole story, *cf. Judges xi.-xii.*

283. **Had dealt.** Would have dealt.

**by argument.** Jephthah sent to the Ammonites a message which defended the rights of the Israelites to the territory claimed by the Ammonites. *Judges xi. 14-27.*

284. **shield and spear.** Jephthah 'smote them . . . with a very great slaughter.' *Judges xi. 33.*

287. **that sore battle.** Following his victory over the Ammonites, Jephthah and his men of Gilead fought the Ephraimites, and taking possession of the passages of the Jordan, slew those whose pronunciation of Shibboleth betrayed their nationality. *Judges xi. 4-6.*

291. **mine.** My people.

292. **not so.** Not easily, not safely.

293-4. *Cf. P. L. i. 26.*

295. **who think not God.** Who think that there is not a God.

297. **never was there school.** Never was there a philosophic sect bound together by this doctrine.

298. **the heart of the fool.** 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God' (*Ps. xiv. 1*).

299. **no man therein doctor.** No man is learned in such doctrine but the fool.

300. **doubt.** Suspect.

303. **his glory's diminution.** As pointed out by Richardson, Milton doubtless had in mind the Latin phrase *majestatem populi Romani minuere*, equivalent to being guilty of *crimen læsæ majestatis*. To 'diminish' the glory of God was to be guilty of high treason against him.

305. They unweave without disentangling. 'Ravel,' from meaning 'unweave,' came occasionally to mean 'entangle,' whence the rise of such a word as 'unravel.'

**resolved.** Answered, satisfied with their explanations.



312. **national obstruction.** An obligation imposed upon a nation, as, for instance, that the Jews should not marry with Gentiles.

313. **or legal debt.** This may follow 'exempt from' (Verity), in which case it would mean 'obligation to fulfil the law.' But this seems forced and tautological. To make it depend on 'without' or 'taint of' gives an easier construction; the meaning then being 'penalty for having broken the law' (Percival).

315. If it were not best for God to dispense with his own laws when he wished, he would have found means within his own laws to accomplish his purpose. 'Otherwise he, who never lacked for means, would not have prompted,' etc.

319. **vow of strictest purity.** The vow of the Nazarite (*Numbers* vi.) did not include celibacy, but being stricter than the rule imposed by 'national obstruction,' it would all the more be infringed by marriage with a Gentile.

321. **unclean.** Probably because she was a Philistine.

**unchaste.** This might apply to the first wife, but not to Dalila, so far as the scriptural narrative is concerned. But in *P. L.* ix. 1060-1, Milton makes the same charge. Percival cites, to the same effect, Josephus v. 8, 11. Collins quotes Milton's *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* ii. 19; but this reference is rather far-fetched.

324. **moral verdict.** As distinguished from the divine judgment.

**quits.** Acquits.

325. Unchastity must have depended on uncleanness: of what avail, then, for reason to acquit her of uncleanness?

327. **careful.** Full of care, anxious.

328. **advise thyself.**

330. **Ay me.** Old French *ayme*, Greek *αἰμοί*.

333. **uncouth.** Strange. Literally, 'unknown,' then (and therefore) 'strange,' then (as now) 'outlandish' or 'barbarous.'

335. **informed.** Directed. *Cf. Comus* 180.
336. **Your younger feet, etc.** This accounts for the coming of the Chorus before Manoa enters (Newton).
338. **signal.** Conspicuous.
345. **Duelled.** In the 'duel,' the armies were on one side, Samson alone on the other. Had others aided him, the word 'duel' would have been out of place.
352. **I prayed.** Josephus is quoted as authority by Percival, but no authority is needed.
354. **as.** That.
360. **graces.** Favors.
- scorpion's.** *Cf. Luke xi. 12*: 'If he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?'
364. **miracle.** Object of wonder.
373. **Appoint.** Several meanings have been suggested: 'arraign,' 'censure,' 'arrange,' 'point at.' The simplest meaning of the line seems to be: Seek not to arrange or direct (appoint) the heavenly disposition of affairs. *Cf. l. 643.* (We speak now of a 'well-appointed' house.) But the Oxford Dictionary is probably right in interpreting the word as found in this line, as 'To assign or impute blame to; to stigmatize, arraign. Obsolete.'
380. **Canaanite.** The Philistines, as editors note, were not Canaanites, although they had immigrated into Canaan.
381. **surprised.** In the military, rather than the psychological, sense of the word.
382. **oft.** Frequent.
387. **rivals.** *Cf. Judges xiv. 20.*
394. **capital.** Chief, or fatal; but it is hard not to see a play upon words, also: capital, pertaining to *caput*, the head, the part where the 'strength lay stored.'
395. **in what part summed.** A repetition to indicate the repeated entreaties.
403. **blandished.** Full of blandishments.

405. *Cf.* Tennyson's *Merlin and Vivien* :

'For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,  
Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.'

408. **well resolved.** Strongly resolute is the meaning here. Contrast with 'resolved' in l. 305.

410. **effeminacy.** Uxoriousness (Percival).

423. **infest.** Molest.

424. **I state not that.** I do not urge or discuss that point; or better, I do not pretend to establish that (Percival).

439. **Them out of thine.** Delivered them out of thy hands.

**slew'st them.** Ethical dative.

453. **idolists.** Idolaters.

454. **diffidence.** In its literal meaning of 'distrust.'

455. **propense.** Inclined.

461. **With me.** So far as I am concerned.

463. **Me overthrown.** I being overthrown. But 'me' makes the construction look more like the Latin absolute, the ablative.

466. **connive.** Tolerate.

471. **confusion.** As Percival notes, a stronger word formerly than now.

**blank.** Make pale.

477-8. **whether God be Lord Or Dagon.** Whether God or Dagon be Lord.

481. **made way.** Gone.

489. **pay on.** Keep on paying.

496. **front.** Forehead.

496-7. The first edition prints the lines thus:

'The mark of fool set on his front?  
But I Gods counsel have not kept, his holy secret'

Warton placed 'But I' in the preceding line, thus making the metre regular. Masson restores the old reading (except the question mark), for which there is the justifi-

cation that the long line 'makes the mind dwell upon Samson's anguish at the thought.' I have preferred to depart from the original reading (which is most likely a printer's error), not so much for metrical reasons as for the sake of the needed emphasis, which will then fall upon the words 'I' and 'God's.'

497. **God's counsel.** In strong antithesis to 'secrets of men,' l. 492.

500. Tantalus, who betrayed the secrets of Zeus, was condemned to suffer in Hades ('their abyss') the pangs of ever-thwarted appetite. An allusion to Greek mythology is of course anachronistic.

501. **horrid pains confined.** 'Pains' follows 'condemned to,' and 'confined' must have 'to be' supplied. Or the construction may be that of l. 29, 'to the confinement of their abyss and horrid pains.' Cf. *Comus* 48, note, p. 227. Strictly, it is the person, not the sin, that is confined.

503. **But act not in.** Take no step of thine own to bring about.

505. **bids you to do it.**

506. Manoa turns Samson's own argument upon him (l. 373).

509. **quit.** Release, acquit.

514. **which argues.** Which shows him to be.

516. **what offered means who knows.** Reject not the means which who knows but that God hath set. Or, more simply:—Certain means seem offered; who knows but that God has set the means before us; reject it not, then.

518. **his sacred house.** The tabernacle.

528. **sons of Anak.** Cf. l. 148, note, p. 290.

531. **my affront.** The affronting of me.

533. **venereal trains.** Snares of love. Such a word as 'venereal,' from Venus, of Latin mythology, shows the futility of rigid objections to anachronism. It would be idle to object to the adjective, which, nevertheless, presupposes the noun whose use would be an anachronism.

543. **thou could'st repress.** In accordance with the Nazarite vow.

**Dancing ruby.** 'Wine when it is red.' *Prov.* xxiii. 31.  
Cf. also *Comus* 673.

545. Cf. *Judges* ix. 13. Keightley notes that in the Hebrew the substantive is plural, 'gods'; so that Milton's rendering is closer than that of the authorized version.

546. **crystalline.** Accent on second syllable.

548. **eastern.** Percival discovered the source of this idea,—*Ezek.* xlvii. 1, 8, 9.

550. **milky.** An unexpected word, which no editor has exactly justified. Possibly Milton thought of water (in comparison with wine) as being as fresh and wholesome as milk. Once before, in *P. L.* v. 306, he speaks of a 'milky stream.'

551. **and refreshed.** 'And was refreshed,' co-ordinate with 'drank'; or 'and being refreshed,' co-ordinate with 'allaying thirst.'

558. **this temperance.** Restraint in this respect.

562. **Effeminately.** Cf. l. 410, note, p. 296.

566. **But to sit idle.** This follows 'serve.'

569. **Robustious.** Strong; a derogatory sense of the word is found in *Hamlet* III. ii. 10, 'hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters.'

571. **craze.** Break; as in *P. L.* xii. 210. Fr. *écrazer*.

574. **draff.** Refuse.

582. **From the dry ground.** The authorized version of *Judges* xv. 19 speaks of 'a hollow place that was in the jaw,' but the word 'jaw' (Lehi) is also interpreted to mean a place, or rock, called Lehi. Milton has followed this latter interpretation.

591. **treat.** Deal.

598. **that rest.** Cf. *Job* iii. 13, 17.

600. **humours black.** The old physiology named four 'humours' in the body, blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy (the black humor, or black bile). The pre-

ponderance of any one affected a man correspondingly. Cf. *Comus* 809, note, p. 247. Cf., also, the *Induction* to Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*.

605. **healing words.** Todd notes Euripides' expression, λόγοι θελακτήριοι (*Hippolytus*, 478). Cf. *P. L.* ix. 290.

609. **reins.** The kidneys.

612. **his.** 'His' was the neuter as well as the masculine possessive. Here, however, there is probably the same sense of personification that there is in the reference to the mind as 'her.' Milton uses 'its' but three times in his verse.

**accidents.** Not here in its logical sense of 'property' (for which see the introductory comments on *Vac. Ex.* and note on l. 59 of that poem, p. 135), but in a sense easily derivable from that; namely, of that which accompanies a thing, a symptom, therefore, and perhaps also a pain or torture. 'Torture' would readily be an 'accident' of 'torment' (l. 606).

615. **answerable.** Corresponding.

624. **apprehensive.** Sensitive, rather than 'apprehending'; although in either sense it refers to the mind.

627. **medicinal.** Here probably to be pronounced as a dissyllable, 'med'c'nal,' as in *Comus*, 636. The objection to pronouncing it in four syllables (with accent on the first syllable) is that not only is the word spelled 'medcinal' in the first edition, but also (according to Todd) it is repeatedly so spelled in Milton's prose. The Milton MS. of *Comus* reads 'med'cinall.'

628. **Alp.** A mountain, usually snow-capped.

633. **his.** 'God's,' implied in 'Heaven's,' in the preceding line.

643. **appointment.** Arrangement. Cf. l. 373.

644. **irreparable.** According to Percival 'irreparable,' making the line an Alexandrine. But the 1671 edition reads 'th' irreparable,' which would indicate a pentameter line and the scansion value either 'irreparable' (an

extra syllable before the final accent in the line), or 'irr'*par*'ble.'

645. **repeated.** Not in the sense of 'repeatedly' (Keightley), but 'made again and again.'

652. Keightley notes that Milton had forgotten that there was not much literature in Samson's time. Milton speaks for himself, regardless of the age in which the chorus lived.

657. **Consolatories writ.** Consolatory treatises are written.

658. **sought.** Not 'is sought for,' but 'sought out,' 'studied,' '*recherché*' (Percival).

659. **lenient of grief.** Alleviating grief. A Latin usage.

662. **of dissonant mood.** In a different key. Cf. *L'All.* 136, note, p. 208.

672. **The angelic orders.** The celestial hierarchies were three, in each of which were three orders: seraphim, cherubim, and thrones; dominations, virtues, and powers; principalities, archangels, and angels.

676. Cf. Gray's *Ode on the Spring* 25-40.

677. **Heads.** Persons. The Latin *capita*.

678. Again the reference to contemporary conditions becomes obvious. The Restoration brought to the republicans the ills spoken of in the score of lines that follow. The republican leaders, who had 'in part' effected their task of establishing a Commonwealth, suffered punishment far more 'grievous' than their 'trespass or omission' warranted. (It will be noted that Milton thinks that some punishment was deserved,—not for republicanism itself, but because the chief men on his side were not in thorough harmony and did not go far enough.) The bodies of Cromwell, Bradshaw and Ireton were exhumed and exposed; some of the prominent men were imprisoned, or subjected to 'unjust tribunals' (Milton doubtless refers to Sir Harry Vane, executed in 1662) and put to death; and those who escaped, as did Milton himself, were bowed down, perhaps, in poverty and disease.

694. **To dogs and fowls a prey.** Cf. *Iliad* i. 4: "their bodies a prey to dogs and all birds."

700. **crude.** Too early.

701-2. Although not of irregular life ('disordinate') yet suffering, without a cause, the punishment that should befall only the dissolute. Not improbably Milton is thinking of the gout that afflicted him in spite of his sparing life.

713. **Comes this way sailing.** Todd points out Milton's contemptuous use of the same image in reference to the prelates: ". . . laugh to see them under sail in all their lawn and sarcenet, their shrouds and tackle" (*Of Reformation* ii).

715. **Tarsus.** There are several scriptural references to ships of Tarshish (Cf. *Isaiah* xxiii. 1), a place usually identified with Tartessus in southern Spain. But in choosing a more euphonious word than Tarshish, Milton, like some other scholars, identifies the town with Tarsus in Cilicia, Paul's city.

716. **Javan or Gadire.** Greece or Cadiz. Javan = 'Ιάωv, whence Ionia. Gadire = Γάδειρα, Latin *Gades*.

719. **hold them play.** Hold play to them; that is, sport with them: not, hold them in play. (Percival.)

720. **amber.** Ambergris. Amber-gris, gray amber, as distinguished from yellow amber, an entirely different substance.

721. **harbinger.** The perfume heralds her approach.

729. **addressed.** Prepared, as in l. 731.

736. **fact.** Thing done; act.

738. **penance.** In the sense of 'penitence.'

739. **No way assured.** 'Pardon assured' is more probably the ablative absolute construction than the construction in which 'is' is omitted.

742. **estate.** State, condition; as in the Prayer Book, 'afflicted, or distressed, in mind, body, or estate.'

748. **hyæna.** Milton compares Dalila to the wild animal



that is proverbially deceitful and vicious, especially in its supposed power, noted by Pliny, to imitate the human voice and thus lure men.

752. **move.** As in l. 222, 'motioned.' Cf. note thereon, p. 291.

760. **principled.** *Comus*, 367, has 'unprincipled.' There is evident reminiscence in this speech of Samson's, of Milton's taking back his first wife.

769. **aggravations.** Additional offences, not merely annoyances. 'Aggravate' is frequently misused in careless speech.

782. As if quoting what might be urged against her, in order to forestall the expected charge.

785. **parle.** Parley.

787. **censure.** Judge. Cf. *Hamlet* I. iii. 69.

788. **gentler.** Gentlier.

794. **fancy.** Affection.

796. **How to endear.** Not 'thee' but 'myself to thee.'

800. **I was assured.** Compare Dalila's excuses throughout with the scriptural account. Note, also, the similarity of her argument, and Vivien's in *Merlin and Vivien*.

803. **That made for me.** That was to my advantage.

811. **for good.** As good.

812. **fond.** Foolish; as previously.

819. **cunningly.** Deceitfully. The use of 'cunning' as applied to children is American, not English.

825. **Such pardon.** The kind of pardon he deserved for himself,—no pardon at all.

836. Cf. note on l. 782, above.

840. **Knowing myself to be.**

842. **Or.** Some early editions read 'For'; which Percival restores, on the ground that it is the reading of 'Milton's own edition'; but Beeching's reprint of that edition gives 'Or.' Keightley suspected that Milton dictated 'And'; but 'Or' gives sufficiently good sense to warrant its retention.

873. **still.** Always.

878. The sense here depends largely upon the punctuation. The original reads:

'lov'd thee, as too well thou knew'st,  
Too well, . . .'

This would now mean: 'loved thee too well, as too well thou knewest'; a reading certainly more commonplace than the reading here given, which Todd used in 1801, and which implies a repetition of 'loved' in l. 879.

880. **levity.** Mere shallowness.

897. **acquit.** Vindicate. Keightley takes 'acquit' in its present meaning, and understands 'as Gods.'

906. **peals.** Cf. l. 235, note, p. 292.

911. Possibly an Alexandrine; but it is easy to scan the line as pentameter, by elision:

'To'ards thee | I intend | for what | I have | misdome.'

913. **sensibly.** Sensitively.

915. **enjoyed.** To be enjoyed, enjoyable.

919. **abroad.** Out of doors.

925. **old age.** The general tone of these speeches implies that old age is not far off. Samson, however, was not an old man when he died. But Milton himself has entered into the situation, and speaks as for himself.

932. **trains.** Deceptive attractions, as in l. 533. and *Comus* 151.

933. **gins.** Snares.

**toils.** Nets.

934. A reminiscence of Circe, and the Sirens.

935. **nulled.** Annulled.

936. Cf. *Psalm* lviii. 4-5.

944. **last.** At last.

947. **gloss.** Comment.

**censuring.** As in l. 787.

950. **To.** Compared with.

971. **Fame.** Rumor rather than distinction.  
**double-faced.** As Janus was.

**double-mouthed.** One mouth to speak evil, and one to speak good,—‘with contrary blast.’

973. **his.** Fame is usually personified as feminine. Keightley suggests that Milton may have dictated ‘one white, the other black,’ thus avoiding the end rhyme. It would, however, be hardly safe to make the change, as it is not impossible that Milton intended a rhyme. To modern ears the rhymeless reading sounds better.

981. Four of the chief cities of the Philistines. Their other main city was Ashkelon.

988-990. **Mount Ephraim, Jael, Sisera.** The song of Deborah (*Judges v.*), who dwelt ‘in Mount Ephraim.’ (*Judges iv. 5*) glorifies Jael for her treacherous murder of Sisera (*Judges iv. 17-21*).

993. **piety.** Duty to family or country.

995. **envies.** Feels hostility.

998. **in the end.** As the serpent’s sting (according to Milton) is in its tail, so the sting of Dalila’s speech is at the very last. A rather unnecessary play upon words.

1000. **aggravate.** Make heavier; its literal meaning. Cf. l. 769, note, p. 302.

1008. Newton quotes Terence (*Andria* iii. 3, 23): *Amanitium iræ amoris redintegratio est.*

1010. **wit.** Mental capacity. There is here a strong resemblance, which I have not seen noted, to these lines of Ben Jonson’s :

‘The bride hath beauty, blood and place,  
 The bridegroom virtue, valour, wit,  
 And wisdom as he stands for it.’

—*The Staple of News* III. i.

1012. **inherit.** Keep.

1017. **seven.** The guests at Samson’s wedding-feast pondered seven days over the riddle (*Judges xiv. 12-18*).

1018. If it had been **any or all these** qualities, that might win woman's love, then the Timnian bride, etc.

1019. Milton transfers the fault of Samson's first father-in-law to Samson's first wife, who is not mentioned, however, as resisting her father's disposal of her.

1020. **paranymph.** Groomsman. *Cf. Judges* xiv. 20.

1025. **for that.** Because.

**such outward ornament.** *Cf. P. L.* viii. 537-542.

1030. **affect.** Like.

1037. **thorn Intestine.** 'Thorn in the flesh' (*II. Cor.* xii. 7).

1038. **within defensive arms.** As we speak of 'inside one's guard.'

1039. **cleaving mischief.** An allusion to the poisoned shirt of Hercules has been assumed by the commentators since Newton; but it is not necessarily implied.

1047. *Cf. Prov.* xxxi. 10, and xviii. 22.

1048. **combines.** Unites with him.

1053. *Cf. P. L.* x. 195-6: God speaks to Eve—

'To thy husband's will  
Thine shall submit; he over thee shall rule.'

*Cf.*, also, *Ephesians* v. 22-23.

1061. **I see a storm.** This allusion to Harapha seems perilously near to inappropriate joking. But Milton was in no jesting mood.

1068. **Harapha.** In *II. Samuel* xxi. 16, 18, 20, the marginal reading for 'giant' is 'Rapha.' That Milton identified his Harapha with this Rapha is shown in l. 1248-1249, where Harapha is spoken of as the father of Goliath. The twenty-first chapter just referred to (v. 22) speaks of four sons of the giant, but one of them is called the 'brother of Goliath': this would make up the five of the 'giant brood.'

1069. **pile high-built.** As if his body were comparable to a high building. *Cf. l.* 1239, 'thy structure.'

1071. I less conjecture. I know even less.  
 1075. **fraught.** The matter with which he is fraught.  
 1076. **chance.** Lot.  
 1077. **these.** The members of the chorus.  
 1080. **Og.** *Numbers* xxi. 33.  
**Anak.** *Numbers* xiii. 22, 33.  
**Emims.** *Deuteronomy* ii. 10.  
 1081. **Kiriathaim.** *Genesis* xiv. 5.  
 1082. **If thou at all are known.** *Cf.* *P. L.* iv. 830:

'Not to know me argues yourselves unknown.'

1087. **camp or listed field.** On the field of battle (*campus*) or in the lists (tournament field).  
 1092. **single me.** Single me out.  
 1093. **Gyves.** Chains. That Milton did not mean handcuffs, as Keightley takes it, is shown by l. 1235.  
 1096. Beeching's reprint gives 'with other arms,'—probably a typographical error of the original. Certainly 'wish other arms' is an utterance more in keeping with the context, and has been substituted by recent editors.  
 1099. **Palestine.** The land of the Philistines.  
 1105. **in thy hand.** In thy power.  
 1109. **assassinated.** Treacherously beset. The word in its early use did not involve actual murder, but meant rather a murderous attack.  
 1113. **close-banded.** Secretly pledged.  
 1120. **brigandine.** Coat of mail.  
**habergeon.** Neck and shoulder armor.  
 1121. **Vant-brace.** Armor for the arms.  
**greaves.** Leg armor.  
 1122. **weaver's beam.** *Cf.* description of Goliath's spear, *I. Samuel* xvii. 7.  
**seven-times-folded.** *Septemplex*, of seven thicknesses.  
 1138. **ruffled porcupines.** Suggesting, of course, Shakespeare's 'fretful porcupine' (*Hamlet* I. v. 19).  
 1139. **forbidden arts.** Magic; with doubtless a reference

to the oath taken by mediæval knights before combat, that they had made no use of charms to protect themselves, but trusted only in God (Warton).

1162. **asses.** Percival points out that the employment of asses for this work is indicated in the Greek version of *Matt.* xviii. 6, *μῶλος ὄνικος*, translated 'millstone' in the authorized version, but 'mylnstoon of asses' by Wyclif. *Cf.* l. 37.

**comrades.** Accented, as originally, on second syllable.

1164. **boisterous.** Strong. *Cf.* l. 568-9.

1184. **league-breaker.** For the Philistines were then rulers over Israel. *Cf. Judges* xv. 11.

1186. **thirty men.** *Judges* xiv. 19.

1195. **politician.** Intriguing, relying on 'policy.'

1197. **spies.** Milton follows here Josephus, who says of the thirty that they were 'in reality to be a guard upon him.' The scriptural narrative does not indicate bad faith, until the thirty 'companions' fear that they are going to lose their wages.

1198. **threatening.** *Judges* xiv. 15.

1199. **secret.** The incident of the lion and the honey was not only the secret of his riddle, but was unknown to anyone—even to his father and mother, who ate of the honey (*Judges* xiv. 9); doubtless, as Percival suggests, because to a Nazarite contact with the lion's carcass was defilement.

1205. Here, and in lines 1208-10, Samson quotes the charges against him.

1208. **a private person.** Not publicly commissioned to war against the Philistines.

1218. **mine own offence.** Following the 1671 text, the invariable reading has been 'my known offence.' The offence lay in Samson's betraying the secret of his divine strength, and 'known' has been rather clumsily interpreted as known to the Philistines, and hence to Harapha. I venture to substitute this conjectural reading, which

makes, I think, better sense, and gives a much more pointed antithesis (with 'your force'). It must be remembered that Milton did not *see* these words in print, and if they were read aloud to him, 'mine own' and 'my known' would have sounded alike.

1220. **appellant.** Challenger. The one challenged was the 'defendant.' *Cf. II. Henry VI. II. iii. 49.*

1222. **thrice.** Samson has previously thrice defied Harapha (l. 1123, 1152, 1174), but he speaks now as if for the third and last time; the thrice-repeated challenge of chivalry being doubtless in the poet's mind.

1223. **of small enforce.** Requiring little force.

1226. Todd quotes Vincentio Saviolo, *Of Honor and Honorable Quarrels* (London, 1595), to the effect that the challenges of traitors, robbers, etc., are to be refused, because a man who should fight with them would be 'making himselfe equall with dishonourable persons.'

1231. **Baal-zebub.** The god of Ekron (*II. Kings i. 2*). Ekron was a city of the Philistines (l. 98).

1234. **bring up thy van.** Bring up thy line of battle; as if Harapha were an army.

1235. The cadence of this line has been caught exactly by Tennyson in a verse of completely different mood: 'Our hoards are little, but our hearts are great' (*Marriage of Geraint*).

1238. **vast.** Belongs with 'bulk.'

1239. **structure.** *Cf. l. 1069.*

1242. **Ashtaroth.** *Cf. Nativ. 200, note, p. 191.*

1245. **unconscionable.** Out of all knowledge; very great. Literally, the word means not able to be grasped by conscience, — 'conscience' having its lost meaning of 'knowledge.'

1248. **five sons.** *Cf. l. 1068, note, p. 305.*

1266. **it may.** That it may.

**mine.** My ruin.

1268. **comely.** Becoming, appropriate. This ode sends

one's thoughts irresistibly to such men as Cromwell ('To peace and truth thy glorious way hast ploughed'), and Milton himself ('They also serve who only stand and wait').

1277. **ammunition.** Preparation for war. Not used elsewhere in Milton's verse.

1278. **feats of war defeats.** Such plays upon words seem not to appeal to our modern taste, but they were frequent in Elizabethan English.

1279. *Cf., e. g.,* the sonnet *On Fairfax* 5: 'Thy firm, unshaken virtue.'

1283. **expedition.** Expeditionousness.

1286. **defence.** Ability to defend themselves.

1288. **saints.** The Republican Independents so called themselves (Percival).

1298. **Labouring.** Causing to labor.

1303. **quaint.** Strange, curious.

1307. **voluble.** Rapidly uttered.

1308. **Ebrews.** Masson notes that Milton so spells the noun, spelling the adjective 'Hebrew.' As the word is used but five times in Milton's verse, this distinction is probably purely accidental.

1309. **remark.** Distinguish.

1312. **triumph.** Public celebration, procession. *Cf. L'All.* 120.

1313. **human rate.** The amount that a man might be expected to have.

1317. **heartened.** With 'refreshments,' Percival suggests. **fresh-clad.** *Cf.* l. 1616.

1320. **law.** The second commandment (*Exodus* xx. 4-6).

1323-5. The sports referred to here are the familiar English pastimes. **Gymnic** is gymnastic; **antics** are buffoons; **mummers**, those who took part in the Christmas pantomimes, or in dumb-shows; **mimics**, actors. An interesting description of mummers may be found in Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, Bk. ii. ch. iv. and v.



1333. **Regard thyself.** Have a care for thyself.
1334. **my conscience.** Rather ought I regard my conscience.
1342. **joined.** Enjoined.
1344. **Brooks.** It brooks.
1346. I regret what will follow from your obstinacy.
1361. **Besides how vile.** Besides being so vile.
1369. **the sentence.** That just uttered by the chorus.
1374. **man prefer.** To prefer man ; following 'venturing.'
1375. **Set.** To set ; as in preceding line.
- 1377-9. Thyer notes *II. Kings* v. 18-19.
1382. **rousing motions.** Cf. 'Divine impulsion prompting' (l. 422).
1387. **ought of presage.** Any power to presage.
1396. **engines.** Implements, contrivances.
- 1404-7. Seemingly spoken to the messenger as a justification for the changed attitude.
- 1408-9. These lines, spoken to the chorus, connect in sense with 1403, as is shown by the construction : I am content to go, but not to comply in anything scandalous, etc.
1410. **resolution.** To go.
- 1411-1412. The Officer speaks here somewhat out of the line of his duty, although the speech is in accord with Manoa's words, 1466-1470.
1412. **favour.** A noun.
1418. **lordliest.** Milton shows here a certain philologic instinct for the derivation of a word whose meaning may have shifted. Cf. *Comus* 325, 748-9, for 'courtesy' and 'homely.'
1419. Cf. *Lycidas* 113-121.
1420. **ought.** At all.
- 1421-2. To Milton it seemed a profanation of the Sabbath to encourage (as had been done both by James I. and Charles I.) the people to 'recreations and sports on the Lord's day.' Cf. *Of Reformation*, b. ii.

1426. Whether this is the last, etc.

1431. May He send thee, etc.

1433. after his message told. The same construction is in *Comus* 48.

1442. Cf. 327.

1448. Several editors note that **come** is used where we should say 'go'; but the text represents the lords' point of view: it was their order that Samson should come to them.

1453. **what**. In what.

1457. **attempted**. Appealed to.

1463. Milton's flings at the relationship between the Royalists and prelacy are frequent. That they passed the press-censorship would be amusing had not the whole subject been of such intimate concern to Milton. This speech of Manoa's without doubt reflects the several attitudes of those whom the Restoration put into power.

1469. **beneath their fears**. Beneath fearing.

1470. **The rest** of the punishment it would be **magnanimity to remit**.

1471. **convenient**. Proper.

1479. **richest**. A point made by Josephus (not in the scriptural narrative): 'Without dispute, the principal person of his country.'

1481. **fixed**. Determined.

1484. **quit**. As in 509, implying a release or acquittal of debt. Manoa is ready to forego his patrimony, releasing it to the lords for his son's ransom.

1490. With this speech compare Dalila's protestations on the same theme, 923-7.

1507. **as next**. As having, because of tribal relationship, the next best right to hope for and enjoy Samson's deliverance.

1512. **inhabitation**. Inhabitants, community: abstract for concrete, as not infrequently in Milton.

1514. **at the utmost point**. To the very last degree.

1515. **ruin.** The word is here used in its literal meaning of 'falling' (of a building).

1527-8. **eye-sight . . . restored.** The Chorus repeats Manoa's hope (1503); but it is open to question whether such emphasis on a false clue be in keeping with the dramatic requirements of the present situation.

1529. **dole.** The word has two meanings: 'grief,' and 'that which is dealt out'; doubtless Milton, while meaning the former, had some sense of the latter in his mind.

1535. **subscribe.** Assent.

1537. **Of good or bad.** Supply 'news' or 'fortune.'

1538. **baits.** Stops to bait (feed) the horses.

1554. **needs.** Is needed.

1557. **sum.** The last or main thing.

1567. **with too rude irruption.** Breaking out too rudely.

1569. **them.** News, really a plural.

1574. **windy.** Empty.

1576. Editors recall a not dissimilar passage in Shakespeare: a frost 'that bites the first-born infants of the spring' (*L. L. L.* I. i. 101).

1585. **at variance with himself.** Not, as Verity explains it, 'What brought him among his foes so soon after his refusal to go?' but 'What turned him against himself?'

1594. **Eye-witness.** Having been eye-witness.

1596. **Occasions.** Business affairs.

1603. **minded.** Made up my mind.

1605. Milton's description of the building is not, I take it, an effort to follow descriptions of any ancient buildings, but merely an attempt to bring before the eye a building that might architecturally comply with the needs of the situation. The comments of some of the editors would seem, therefore, to be wasted erudition. The few departures from the scriptural account are not, I think, of great significance. That Milton calls the building a theatre, instead of a 'house' (*Judges* xvi. 26, 27, 29, 30) only indicates the literal use of 'theatre' (place for spectators),

not its acquired meaning of a place in which drama is presented. That he speaks of the crowd outside (not spoken of in the Bible), may grow out of the necessity to provide some place for the Messenger to be. That the building was 'half-round' and not wholly enclosed is doubtless due to the poet's necessity to account for the view of the sports obtainable from the roof. Milton's consequent omission to mention the people on the roof may be accidental; or, as Verity suggests, the Puritan poet may have intended to indicate that the people were not to be involved in the destruction of the aristocracy. It seems best, however, to take the description as simply as possible. Its magnificence is its own ample warrant; it needs no inner meaning.

1608. **sort.** Rank, quality.

**in order.** In their proper rank; or, with purpose.

1610. **banks.** Benches.

1616. **livery.** Cf. 1317.

1619. **cataphracts.** Armed men on armed horses.

**spears.** Bearers of spears.

1627. **stupendious.** So spelled here, and in *P. L.* x. 351.

1637. **as one who prayed.** Note how finely Milton has caught the spirit of the situation while strictly preserving the Messenger's point of view. It is even a question whether Milton has not equalled the majesty of the scriptural account, which gives the prayer itself, and the 'great matter' that Samson 'in his mind revolved,' namely, with his own death to bring destruction on the Philistines. Verity's objection that 'eyes fast fixed' is not a very appropriate description of the blind Samson, seems rather remote. Milton himself did not appear blind.

1645. **strike.** The double meaning in this case is doubly forcible.

1653. **or priests.** Keightley's conjecture that Milton may have dictated 'and priests' is needless. As it stands,

the text implies that all, whoever they were, lords, counsellors or priests, were involved in the general ruin.

1665. **not willingly.** That is, not seeking self-slaughter, but accepting it as a necessary condition of the general destruction.

1666. **dire necessity.** Milton is not, I think, speaking of necessity in the Greek sense (*ἀνάγκη*) and calling it 'dire'; it is rather that this especial necessity was dire. If the former, however, the tone of the passage seems not Hebraic.

1669. Here, and before l. 1687, the 1671 edition has only *Semichor*. The figures 1 and 2, respectively, are prefixed for the sake of exactness.

1671. **regorged.** Eaten to excess; *re-* being intensive (Percival).

1673. **Dread.** Cf. *Isaiah* viii. 13.

1674. **Silo.** Shiloh, where the tabernacle then was (*Judges* xviii. 1).

1676. **who.** The spirit of phrenzy.

1682. **fond.** As in l. 812.

1685. **to sense reprobate.** The adjective, which means 'abandoned,' is in parallel construction with 'Insensate.'

1688. **thought extinguished quite.** Supposed to be made entirely harmless.

1690. **virtue.** Strength.

1692-5. **And as . . . but as.** This passage has caused perplexity. The assault of Samson is compared to that of a dragon and to that of an eagle. Inasmuch as the latter is preceded by 'but,' some commentators have supposed that there must be an opposition, and that therefore Milton must have dictated, '*Not as an evening dragon . . . but as an eagle.*' This whole difficulty is a superficial one, as various commentators, beginning with Thyer, have shown. Samson came like a serpent (dragon), in the dark, the tame fowl suspecting nothing; then, like an eagle of Jove, he bolted thunder on their heads. Milton merely changes his metaphor to suit his thought.

1695. **villatic.** Of the farmhouse. Richardson cited Pliny's *villaticas alites*.

1696. **cloudless thunder.** Thunder out of a clear sky.

1699. **self-begotten bird.** The phoenix, that dying, produced from its ashes a successor; there being no other of its kind in the world.

1700. **embost.** Embosked, hidden in the woods.

1702. **holocaust.** A whole burnt-offering.

1703. The simile may end with line 1702, in which case this line is spoken of 'Virtue'; or it may end with this line.

**teemed.** Produced; a participle.

1704. **revives.** The subject of the verb is 'Virtue,' 1697.

1706. **her.** Virtue's.

1707. **A secular bird.** As a secular bird, as a phoenix. 'Secular' here means 'living for centuries.'

1709. **quit.** Acquitted. *Cf.* 509.

1713. **Caphtor.** Crete, whence the Philistines were said to have come. *Cf. Amos ix. 7; Deut. ii. 23.*

1727. **lavars.** *Cf. Comus* 838, note, p. 248.

1728. **with what speed.** With all possible speed.

1730-3. *Cf. Judges xvi. 31.*

1737. **legend.** Narrative.

1746. **dispose.** Disposal.

1749. **hide his face.** Percival notes that the scriptural use of this expression commonly indicates God's displeasure.

1751. **in place.** Appropriately, fittingly. We use the opposite expression 'out of place' for an ill-timed remark, etc.

1755. **acquist.** Acquisition.

## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS.

The following questions and comments are added with some diffidence, for a good teacher is in no need of suggestions regarding the kind of questions to be put to a class. It is hoped, however, that the questions may help to encourage the student to think about what he is studying. As their main purpose is to arouse intellectual curiosity, the questions will be found, at times, to be such as will admit of no easy and definitive answer. To such questions it is not assumed that the student's answers will possess critical value, but the time spent in coming to a conclusion will not be wasted. The questions are obviously not exhaustive: those asked at first are not repeated, for the teacher may readily frame similar questions for every poem. In the main, the order of difficulty is observed.

### PSALMS CXIV. AND CXXXVI.

Compare these paraphrases with the psalms themselves, noting the changes which Milton made.

Which opinion do you prefer:—Masson's statement (*Life*, vol. I. p. 97) that the verses 'have some poetic merit. They are clear, firmly-worded, and harmonious'; or, the statement that they are good rhetoric rather than good poetry? In the first edition of Masson's *Life*, I. p. 67, the statement ran: 'have real poetic merit.' Was the change judicious?

Milton's youthful imagination shows itself in the adjectives (why in the adjectives?) so liberally sprinkled through the paraphrases. Some of the adjectives are

much better than others: point out those that seem to you apt.

ON THE DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT.

Note on this poem and elsewhere constructions unlike those that are familiar to us. *E. g.* l. 1. 'no sooner blown but blasted'; l. 2. 'Summer's chief honour, if thou hadst outlasted'; l. 5. 'amorous on'; l. 6. 'thought to kiss'; l. 13. 'long-uncoupled bed'; l. 48. 'and thou some goddess fled'; l. 66. 'To slake his wrath whom sin hath made our foe.'

What feelings may be looked for in an elegiac poem? To what extent are they present here? *Cf.* the comment on *Lycidas*, p. 328.

Is Milton's choice of words felicitous or only careful? Does his rather frequent use of double adjectives like 'swift-rushing' signify anything? Milton employs in *Lycidas* 8-9 a repetition nearly like that in this poem 25-26: which repetition is the more effective? What do the last two lines of the poem mean?

AT A VACATION EXERCISE.

In this early essay in English verse Milton has ranged from grave to gay. The chief interest is not a poetical one, after all, although there is at least one passage of sound and good poetry in it. In what other ways is the poem interesting? What passage is good poetry? Observe that Milton holds to the couplet effect: that is, after most of the couplets there is a pause in sense, indicated by a punctuation mark. In only four or five cases does the sense proceed without break to the next couplet. This latter phenomenon is called *enjambement*, or a 'run-over,' or 'flow-over,' line. It also occurs, of course, within the couplet. What would be the effect if such run-over lines occurred more frequently? Read a page or two of Keats's *Endymion* to see what that effect is.



Can any conclusion as to Milton's sense of humor be drawn from this poem? his conception of poetry? the kind of subjects that appealed to him? It is important to note (why?) that Milton not only regards the English language as needing no apology, but also recognizes its fitness for a great theme.

#### ODE ON THE NATIVITY.

What is the effect of beginning with the four introductory stanzas, instead of immediately with the Hymn? The beginning of the Hymn carries out a pretty fancy rather than a very deep or serious thought; and the fancy itself has a slight incongruity. Nature, in awe, doffs her gaudy trim, and then, in guilty shame, pleads for a covering of innocence; as if the poet had first thought of earth's bareness as the appropriate laying aside of all ornament, and then, as an afterthought growing out of the figure in l. 35-36, had regarded the same bareness as a revelation of earth's sin. This is to look at the lines more curiously, doubtless, than Milton intended, and yet some stanzas (*e. g.*, stanza xiii.) bear the test better than do others. Milton's early poems contain figures whose power ranges from loftiness to far-fetched triviality,—conceits, we call figures of the latter kind. Can you tell, in this ode, where Milton seems to be writing in the deepest earnestness and where he is dealing lightly with a pleasant fancy? Is such variation a blemish or an added interest? How much of the poem deals with the scene of the Nativity itself? Milton is evidently inspired by the far-reaching significance of the birth of Christ: wherein is this significance shown to be? In other words, what *aspects* of the subject chiefly attract Milton? What other aspects might he have treated? 1. 7. Does 'with' belong with 'work,' or 'peace'? 47. Why '*olive green*'? 50. Why '*amorous*'? 52. Allusion to what historical fact?

108. 'Happier' than what? 143-4, note (p. 190). Was the change a good one?

UPON THE CIRCUMCISION.

Is the rather self-contained and intellectual tone of this poem due to the absence of feeling or the repression of feeling? or is neither explanation adequate? Are the two stanzas of equal interest to you? The first five lines of stanza i. seem to have more charm than the next four lines: is this your opinion? l. 17. 'For' implies a reason: trace the progress of thought that makes the reason (what is it?) adequate. 21. 'great covenant': what covenant?

THE PASSION.

One may, respectfully enough, agree with Milton that the poem is a failure. Its incongruous mixture of sacred and profane, serious and fanciful, leaves an unpleasant impression on the reader. There are certain mechanical virtues to admire in it. The verse flows smoothly, the words sound well, the expression is clear and compact. l. 6-7. Explain the appropriateness of the figure. 29-35. This stanza is possibly the sort of thing that Milton has 'nothing satisfied with.' What is the trouble with it?

MAY MORNING.

Note the change of metre which follows the change from the description to the invocation. Note, too, the happy simplicity of the words. Is the ending abrupt?

ON SHAKESPEAR.

It is always interesting to know what one great poet thought of another; and although the Milton who wrote these lines was by no means a great poet at the time, the lines remain as almost the only word of his on his greater

predecessor. Compare with this poem the two incessantly quoted lines in *L'Allegro* (133-4):

'. . . sweetest Shakespear, Fancy's child,  
Warble his native wood-notes wild.'

Which of the two tributes seem to you to contain the more satisfying conception of Shakespeare's real power? Compare also with this poem Matthew Arnold's, Browning's, and Swinburne's sonnets on Shakespeare. When a poet chooses a great subject for a brief poem, it is always instructive to note the phase of the subject that seems to him most worthy of the emphasis he puts upon it, by singling it out for treatment.

#### ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER ; ANOTHER ON THE SAME.

Is the editor's comment just: that these poems are not in very good taste? What does the expression, 'in good taste' mean to you?

#### MARCHIONESS OF WINCHESTER.

Is Milton's tone as sympathetic as in his poem on the death of his niece, the 'fair infant'? Is the metre adapted to the expression of sad or tender thoughts?

#### L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO.

One must avoid the notion that *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are diametric opposites. The supposed diametric contrast arises chiefly from the preludes, rather than from the poems taken as a whole. When the joys of cheerfulness and of meditation are compared in themselves, they are seen to be not irreconcilable; they may easily enough be different moods of the same man. It is not needful, nor, perhaps, possible, to regard all of the descriptions as pertaining to some one place or season.

The poems, then, are not studies of two different kinds of men. The theme is really a consideration, a balancing, of two kinds of pleasure,—the pleasure that grows out of good spirits, and the deeper pleasure that grows out of good thinking. The latter is naturally that towards which a man of Milton's fine fibre would most incline. Therefore upon this pleasure is laid the greater stress.

*L'Allegro.*—1. 6. Why jealous wings? 28. What image have we in mind when we speak of a person's face as 'wreathed in smiles'? 34. Why should this expression have passed into familiar use? 43. Is the image apt? 49-52. Is Milton's description of familiar little things of this sort as effective as his description (59-62) of the sunrise, for instance? 73-74. Does the movement of these two lines resemble the movement of the next two? Read them aloud and note if your voice pauses in the same place in each line. Does the sound of the lines seem to suit the subject? 84. What is gained by the use of such adjectives as 'savoury,' in this line, 'neat-handed' (86), 'jocund' (94), 'drudging' (105), 'shadowy' (108), 'whispering' (116), 'haunted' (130), 'eating' (135), 'melting' (142)? 151. In brief, what are 'these delights'?

*Il Penseroso.* 1. Does Milton mean that all joys are vain and deluding, or does he disapprove only of such joys as are, in themselves, vain and deluding? 13. What is gained by this ingenious explanation of the somber hue of Melancholy? 24. Why is Saturn called 'solitary'? 31. The poet's vision of the coming of Melancholy and her train is, of course, markedly different from his vision of the coming of Mirth and her followers: how, then, is this fact to be reconciled with the statement that the speaker in the first poem is not the opposite of the speaker in the second? 46. What does this line mean? Would it be fair to call it a foreshadowing of Wordsworth's expression,—'plain living and high thinking'? 50. Does 'trim' define some one kind of garden Milton may have in mind, or does it

characterize his general notion of gardens? 75. Does 'wide-watered' add anything to 'far-off'? 76. Is 'roar' an expressive word for the sound of the 'far-off curfew'? 77. What must 'air' mean here? 80. What does this line mean? 88. It will be seen that Milton's philosophical reading is not so much melancholy as serious. He also reads tragedy, however: does his conception of it seem melancholy? As far as you can tell from his words, what kind of poetry attracted Milton? 127. What difference in tone between Milton's description of the rainy morning, and Longfellow's 'dark and dreary' day: 'It rains and the wind is never weary'? Does this comparison throw any light on Il Penseroso's melancholy? 151. Does Milton's description of music here and elsewhere (161-166) tell what music is like, or does it merely tell how much Milton likes music? Cf. *Sol. Mus.* p. 44. 175. What in brief, are these pleasures? Is there any significance in Milton's speaking of the 'delights' of Mirth (*L'All.* 151) and the 'pleasures' of Melancholy? or is the second word used merely to avoid a repetition of the first?

#### AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.

Note here, as in the following poem, the poet's tendency to rise above the immediate demands of his subject. Milton leaves one in no doubt as to the upward direction of his thought. In these two poems to what extent are the ideas similar? what differences are there? Is the conclusion of either one of the poems more majestic or more appropriate than that of the other?

#### ON TIME.

This poem is as sincere and sustained as *The Passion* is unequal and artificial. Is this statement true? What effect has the varying length of the lines? l. i. Why 'envious'?

## ARCADES.

How can one tell whether this mask is given indoors or out of doors, before or after dark? Is there a series of incidents or but one main situation? Does anything happen between the first and second songs? Are the characteristics of those who sing or speak brought out clearly? How had Fame been lavish (l. 9)? To whom does the speech of the Genius pay compliment? Does the somewhat elaborate description of the Genius (44-67) detract from the complimentary effect of the mask, or does it emphasize it? Is the speech as poetical as the lyrics? l. 51. The last three words of this line are adjective, noun, adjective,—the two adjectives referring to the one noun. In his *Imaginary Conversation between Southey and Landor*, Landor says: 'Milton was very Italian, as you know, in his custom of adding a second epithet after the substantive, where one had preceded it.' Find other examples of this arrangement. Was Landor right in thinking that a similar instance was to be found in *Il Pens.* 156 (*Cf.* note on that line, p. 216)?

## COMUS.

Before the following questions are taken up, the entire mask should be read.

At what points in the story (as Milton gives it) is your interest strongest? What parts of the action seem to you the most important, so far as helping the story to its conclusion is concerned? What situations (which we may take to be those places in the plot, in which our interest is centered in what may be going to happen) seem most full of human interest? Which persons are the most interesting in themselves? Who cause things to happen? Into what parts, or stages of action, do you think this mask is divided (*e. g.*, the first conversation of the Lady and Comus is one stage of the action, and makes an inter-

esting situation)? Can any of these parts be grouped into larger parts? The more interesting moments might be regarded as situations, the smaller parts as scenes, the groups as acts. Do the several persons show enough points of resemblance (in kind, character, or in what they do) to warrant your placing them together in small groups, or must they be regarded as separate in all these respects? Do the persons who do the most appear most prominently at the exciting times? What character could best be spared, so far as the mere plot is concerned? Can you say of any character that he or she could least be spared? Does anything happen that could be omitted without affecting the story? Can you say of any one incident that it is absolutely necessary in order that the story come to its present conclusion? Upon what incidents does the story depend? Upon what characters? What share have these characters in these incidents? How much time does the action cover?

First Scene.—In the first performance, as the Bridge-water MS. indicates (the handwriting is probably Lawes's), the mask does not open with the Spirit's speech, but with a song by the Spirit. This song of twenty lines consists of part of what is now the epilogue.\* Why was the song transferred to the beginning? Why, do you suppose, did Milton not leave it there?

1-92. Note the long sentences of the opening speech: what effect have they? Is this speech plain and simple, or elaborate? Do the details make it clearer, or more beautiful?

\* It begins, 'From the heavens now I fly,' instead of, 'To the ocean'; omits the four lines, 'Along the crisped shades . . . bounties bring'; inserts a line after the present line 995; omits the present line 997; and ends with line 999, changed to 'Where many a cherub soft reposes.' In brief, this prologue looks like a revised and condensed form of the passage 976-1011, but in reality it is much nearer Milton's first draft of the epilogue (Cambridge MS.) than is the epilogue as it appears in print, or in the second draft (Cambridge MS.).

87. Does this mean that the swain, Thyrsis (who does not himself appear in the mask), was gifted with supernatural powers? Or is it only a compliment to the musical skill of the shepherd? Cf. 494-6.

93-144. In what ways, apart from the substance of the thought, has Milton made this speech of Comus differ from the preceding speech of the Spirit? Is the language more, or less, graceful?

144. Is there a reason why this expression the 'light fantastic round' should be but rarely quoted, while 'light fantastic toe' (*L'All.* 34) is quoted so frequently?

145-169. Is this speech more dramatic than the preceding speech?

151-3. Is this said humorously or seriously?

164-7. Is this statement enough to make the spectator realize that the Lady sees Comus as if he wore rustic garb? What would be gained, or lost, if Comus, when he 'fairly stepped aside,' should change his costume, as did the Spirit?

170-229. The former speeches were those of supernatural beings; this is uttered by a human being: does Milton indicate the difference in any other way than by letting the Lady explain the situation in which she finds herself? From the way in which the various details and incidents are described, can you tell anything about the character of the speaker?

230-243. Is this song beautiful in itself, or does it gain much of its effect from being sung by the Lady at just this point in the story?

244-270. Does this speech show new qualities in Comus?

246. Is this the kind of praise we might expect from Comus? or is it Milton's compliment to Lady Alice Egerton?

267. Does Comus mean to flatter the Lady, or is he sincere in thinking that she is perhaps a goddess?

271-276. How does the Lady interpret the preceding speech?



277-290. What is the effect of this single-line dialogue?

291-330. Had the Lady any reason whatever to suspect that Comus was deceiving her?

321. Why does the Lady at once accept Comus's offer to conduct her to a 'loyal cottage'? Does she forget her wish to know the 'readiest way' (l. 305) to the place where Comus says her brothers are?

331-358. These speeches are descriptive of what three things (331-342, 342-349, 350-358)? In a drama, full of action, these speeches would at least be condensed: could they be dispensed with?

358. Is this line in accord with l. 352-3 and l. 186?

359-385. What is the substance of this speech? Does it explain what has gone before, or does it carry on the story?

369-371. Is this applicable to the Brothers themselves?

385-407. Does this answer the preceding speech, or does it introduce new ideas?

404. Is this in accord with the speaker's first speech?

407-417. Are new ideas introduced?

412. Has the speaker characterized himself fairly?

418-475. What relation has this speech to the whole mask?

476-493. Why are the speeches short? If you were writing stage directions, in what parts of the dialogue would you place the several 'hallos'?

494-512. Why are the speeches somewhat longer than those preceding? Are the rhymes an advantage or are they unnecessary?

509-510. Is this a fair way of stating the case? Does the speaker think that it is fair?

513-580. Is this speech as characteristic of the speaker as was the opening speech of the mask? In answering this question, consider not merely the language and the things spoken of, but also the attitude the speaker seems to have to the several subjects of his speech. Remember

that the Spirit is now speaking as if he were Thyrsis, the shepherd. Does he speak as a shepherd would speak? Was Thyrsis an ordinary shepherd? Do you see any reason to regard this second account (520-539) of the doings of Comus (*Cf.* 59-77) as an artistic or an inartistic thing? Which account seems the better one, or can they be compared?

523-530. Is this enough to justify l. 57?

571. Does this mean that the Spirit saw Comus as if disguised, or does Milton say this in order to have the account seem plausible to the Brothers, or was Comus really disguised, after all?

580-658. Does this dialogue advance the action? Does the Elder Brother's speech (584-599) repeat his former arguments, or add new ones? Is the long speech of the Spirit's as elaborate in language as were his other long speeches?

659-705. Is this part of the dialogue complete in itself, or does it lead up to a new situation? Does the Lady refuse Comus's glass because she is wise, or because she is good?

706-755. Does Comus change his tone? Does he still attempt to deceive the Lady, or to justify his actual views, or both?

756-799. What relation has this speech to the whole mask?

800-813. Does Comus's tone change here?

801. Does this line throw any light on the question asked concerning l. 246?

805. Does he dissemble?

814-889. In this long and varied speech of the Spirit's how many kinds of poetry do you find? Does the language change with the metre?

815. Is there a dramatic reason why the Brothers did not seize the wand?

824-857. Does Milton here, and elsewhere in *Comus*, tell a story well? What other stories are told?

859-866. Does this song resemble in any respect the Lady's song (230-243)? Does it gain anything from the situation, or it is complete in itself?

867-889. Is this part of the adjuration like the preceding part?

890-901. The same question may be asked regarding this song as was asked of the other songs.

902-921. Is this brief dialogue more or less dramatic, more or less lyric, than the forty lines preceding? Why does not the Lady offer thanks? And why do the Lady and her brothers say nothing from the flight of Comus to the end of the mask?

922-957. What two things (922-937, and 938-957) are the subject of this speech? Is either one more poetic or more dramatic than the other?

958-975. Is either of these songs more dramatic than the other? Where are the father and mother?

976-1023. Is this a repetition of any part of the Spirit's opening speech? Is it like that speech in tone? Do the Lady and her brothers find out who the shepherd was? To whom is this speech addressed? Is the ending effective?

#### LYCIDAS.

As one takes up the serious study of *Lycidas*, he may not unnaturally ask himself whether or not the purpose of an elegy is best fulfilled by the use of such pastoral imagery as Milton employs. To many persons an elegy is an expression of personal sorrow, and can be effective only when written in the most direct and simple way. Artificiality in an elegy is to such persons peculiarly repugnant; and the imagery of shepherds and flocks seems to them highly artificial, and *Lycidas*, therefore, not as sincere a poem as (for example) *In Memoriam*. Dr. Johnson very vehemently held that *Lycidas* was devoid of

real passion, 'for passion runs not after remote allusions. . . Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.' It may be said in reply that the pastoral form for elegies had been sanctioned by centuries of usage. The pastoral form was, to be sure, a conventional one; but it is natural to speak in conventional form, although such utterance may not sound natural to an age which has dropped the particular convention. To us as well as to Dr. Johnson, *Lycidas* doubtless sounds less like an expression of personal feeling than it did to Milton. But there is no reason to question a poet's sincerity because he uses imagery to convey his meaning, even though the image be prolonged through the entire poem. The image may not please the reader, but that is another matter.

It may be added that we have no reason to think that Milton was deeply affected by the death of King. Certainly he could have felt no such sorrow as he felt at the death of his close friend, Charles Diodati, in whose memory he wrote a Latin elegy, *Epitaphium Damonis*,—also in pastoral form. *Lycidas* shows us clearly enough that the direct expression of grief is not the sole purpose of elegy. Another purpose may be to offer a tribute of respect. To write something that would have met with the friend's approbation is as sincere (though not as direct) a way of showing respect as is telling the actual state of one's feelings. The poet who writes an elegy must be left free to speak in the way that to him seems best. Milton preferred the pastoral form; Tennyson, the direct utterance of *In Memoriam*: they spoke not merely in different ways, but they said different things; their elegies would doubtless not have been successful had each poet tried the other method, but the poems as they stand are among the best in our literature.

Does the passage on the 'corrupted Clergy' (l. 113-131) add to the strength or impressiveness of the poem, or would the tribute to King be more satisfying without it?

What are two or three of the qualities in this poem that may have helped to make it famous?

#### THE SONNETS.

The structure of Milton's sonnets should be examined carefully. A sonnet consists of fourteen iambic pentameter lines, which may be divided into two groups: the first eight lines constitute the octave, the last six the sestet. Strictly speaking, the arrangement of rhymes should follow the usage of Petrarch, but many sonnets, notably those of Spenser and of Shakespeare, do not follow the Italian model. Milton uses the Italian form, which may be indicated briefly, thus:—the first, fourth, fifth, and eighth lines rhyme; the second, third, sixth, and seventh: in the sestet some variation is permitted, one arrangement being one rhyme for lines nine, eleven, and thirteen, and one for lines ten, twelve, and fourteen; and another, lines nine and twelve rhyming, lines ten and thirteen, and lines eleven and fourteen. Reduced to rhyme-formula, the octave is always *abbaabba*; the sestet *cdcdcd*, or *cdecde* or, indeed, any arrangement of either two or three rhymes that avoids a couplet at the end; although the avoidance of a couplet is not as imperative as it is sometimes said to be. The rhyme formula of the *Nightingale* sonnet is *abbaabba cdcdcd*; that to *Lady Margaret Ley* *abbaabba cdecde*; that *On Age of Twenty-Three* *abbaabba cdedce*; that *On Fairfax* *abbaabba cddcdc*; that to *Cromwell* *abbaabba cddcee* (couplet ending).

Are there any sonnets of Milton's whose rhyme-formula is unlike those just noted? Does the sense usually come to a pause at the end of the octave, or is it carried over into the sestet? In the cases where octave and sestet seem to be kept apart in sense, do there seem to be separate functions for the two parts; *i. e.*, does the octave or the the sestet contain, for example, the gist of the subject?

does either embody illustration, or conclusion? and does the octave or the sestet embody the best part of the sonnet? Which sonnets may have their substance expressed in a few words? Name some of the qualities of the sonnets. Is Milton more effective when he is praising or when he is denouncing? Apart from those sonnets that are uttered in praise or indignation, in what attitudes of mind does Milton write? Wordsworth called Milton's sonnets 'Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!' and Samuel Johnson, in speaking of them, said (as usually quoted): 'Milton, Madam, was a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock, but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones' (*Boswell's Life*, 13 June, 1784). Which man was right?

## SAMSON AGONISTES.

Before these questions are taken up, the entire drama should be read.

What points in the scriptural narrative has Milton developed most fully? Which of these points are set forth in action, and which are merely told about? What points does Milton leave untouched? Are they essential parts of the complete story? Does Milton leave out any characters that are important in the scriptural narrative? Do the characters he introduces play important parts? Are any incidents introduced that are not in the Biblical account? At what time of day does the drama begin? When does it end? Does the place change?

The drama falls into several divisions (separated by choral odes): can you indicate these divisions, by pointing out the several stages by which the play proceeds? What is done in these several stages, or steps, and what persons carry on the action in each step? Milton says in his preface: 'It suffices if the whole drama be found not produced beyond the fifth act'; but he intentionally makes no

specific statement to indicate the limits of each of the five acts conventionally belonging to a tragedy: do the divisions spoken of just above seem to you to correspond to the five acts? The Chorus at times speaks in a lyric vein while the action pauses; at times joins in the regular spoken conversation, thus taking part in the action; and at times has a lyric, rather than a spoken, part in the action: can you, as you read over the parts assigned to the Chorus, discriminate these three functions? Does the Chorus do anything else?

1-114. This long speech (longer than any speech in *Comus*) is technically the prologue of the drama. 'Prologue' is used here in the classic, not the modern, sense of the word: what is the difference? What seems to be the dramatic purpose of this prologue? How does it compare in function (and in language) with the opening speech in *Comus*?

1. To whom is Samson talking? How long does he talk to this person? Do you suppose that the person remains and listens, remains and does not listen, or does not remain? Derive your answer from the text, if possible.

36. Why does it seem not inappropriate for Samson to speak of his own strength as 'glorious'? Cf. l. 199-200.

41. In view of the note on this line (p. 287), do you think Landor's punctuation preferable to the one adopted by the present editor? Read the line aloud, carefully noting the effect of the different punctuations: what is the effect?

66-109. With Samson's lament over his blindness, compare Milton's words when he speaks of his own blindness (*P. L.* iii. 21-55). Can you express the difference in tone?

110. This marks the coming of the Chorus. What is the effect of Samson's thinking that they may be the Philistines, his enemies?

115-175. Does the Chorus intend Samson to hear? What does the Chorus tell us about Samson that would

have been inappropriate in the opening speech? What has happened thus far?

151-169. Does the Chorus view Samson's imprisonment and blindness sympathetically or 'philosophically'?

176-292. How far does this dialogue advance the action? (This same question applies to each dialogue in the drama and therefore will not be formally repeated.)

178-186. Note the partly personal, partly general, tone of the Chorus's speech: this is in accord with the Greek habit of making the Chorus take part in the action and yet, as it were, view the action as if aloof from it. Does the Chorus say anything that mere friends of Samson would be unlikely to say?

195. Is there any real incongruity between this line and the half-dozen lines beginning with l. 66? Which passage truly expresses Samson's feeling?

214. 'Besides' what?

241. Is Samson's scrupulousness, in placing the blame where it belongs, a sign of strength or weakness?

263. Why is the term 'trivial weapon' used here, instead of 'ass's jaw,' as in l. 1095? Cf. 142-3, where both methods of expression find place. What difference of speaker and situation in these three places?

293-325. Does this expression of the Chorus depend upon what has gone before, or prepare for what is next to come? To whom does the Chorus seem to be speaking? Had the previous conversation reached a natural end, or does this ode interrupt Samson's very brief speech?

326-651. Is Manoa or Samson the chief figure of this part of the drama? Upon what basis may such a question be answered?

340-348. Is Manoa's sorrowful surprise like that of the Chorus (l. 117-150)?

361-367. Compare with l. 23-42. What difference in the way two persons say practically the same thing?



373. The Chorus has given similar advice to Samson. Where?

418-419. Does this corroborate your answer to the question under l. 195?

433. Why does Manoa call the coming event a 'worse thing'?

473. Was it a prophecy on Samson's part? Was it a prophecy, considered by itself? as Manoa takes it?

481-483. What effect has this on the outcome?

500. Here (as in l. 150) Milton draws illustrations from the mythology of the Greeks, whom he calls Gentiles. Do you feel sufficiently sure of the spirit of the drama to determine whether such references widen the appeal of the poetry, or seem out of key? (Do not try to answer this question unless it appeals to you as a concrete thing: if it seems vague to you, pass it by.)

503, 506. Again, and this time from Manoa, comes the injunction to leave to a higher power the ordering of events: does this show in Milton a resignation to fate? How does it harmonize with l. 221-226?

541-557. From this passage, *Comus* 47, and the sonnet *To Mr. Lawrence* 9-10, can you draw conclusions regarding Milton's attitude to the subject of the several verses?

577-589. Does this speech help to bring about the catastrophe, or does it only foreshadow the end?

598. What gives this line its power?

606-651. Is the tone of this speech the same as that of the opening speech (1-114)? Is there any significance in the irregular metre which obtains through the whole speech (only the latter part of the opening speech was in irregular metre)?

617-632. This paragraph is full of a diction that certainly cannot be called simple; but it is quite unlike the elaborate language of the Spirit in *Comus* (*e. g.*, *Comus* 548-562): can you tell what the difference is?

652-709. Does this ode seem to grow out of the whole preceding incident, or out of Samson's preceding speech? Is the ode to be regarded as expressing one thing or several? In either case, what is the subject?

667. Does the paragraph beginning here grow out of the preceding paragraph?

687. The same question is in place. This whole chorus, so full of personal application to Milton and his associates, introduces an element of outside interest. Do you feel able to say whether the drama is helped or hurt thereby? (The answer to this must rest upon whether or not you feel that the language is completely applicable to the dramatic situation, quite apart from any other meaning it may have. Let this question pass unless you have a definite conviction in the matter.)

709. Does this prayer for a 'peaceful end' seem effective, in view of your knowledge of the end itself?

710-724. Is there a touch of humor in this description? Cf. Milton's preface, l. 34-35, p. 133.

725-731. How much of this might have been omitted if the drama had been written for acting? Why?

732-1009. This part of the drama, interesting as it is in itself, has been regarded by some critics as contributing nothing to the action,—that is, that the story is in the same situation at the end of the dialogue as at the beginning; it has therefore been called an episode, which means an incident separate in itself, only related to the main story, and not a part of it. Others have held that the talk with Dalila changes the situation somewhat. Which do you support? Does Dalila use deceit at first, finally allowing her true character to appear, or is she sincere, using one argument only when another argument has failed?

778. Is this point well taken?

782. Note here, and later (800, 822, 836, 895), how these quotations, direct or indirect, give an effect of dialogue

within a speech. Would it be as effective, if the other speaker actually interrupted in some such words?

800. Dalila realizes that here is the weakness of her position: does she attempt to evade or to answer the all-important question? Is her management of the difficulty skilful?

819-820. Is this a fair characterization of Dalila's plea?

843-870. Dalila says in this speech that her course of action was influenced by her love for Samson; in her former speech she also speaks of her love for Samson, and tells what it led her to do: does she contradict herself or not? If Dalila believed in Dagon, was her action in betraying Samson worse than Samson's in marrying a Philistian woman to work destruction upon the Philistines?

876-902. Does Samson argue fairly, in view of l. 219-236?

907-927. Has Dalila anything to gain by obtaining Samson's forgiveness, securing his release from prison, and tending him 'with nursing diligence'? Why does she ask forgiveness? Is there a dramatic reason for this speech?

946. Is Samson's fear warranted, that if he yielded to Dalila's importunities she would again betray him? What would be the result of such a betrayal?

965. Does Dalila answer her own question?

997-1009. What is the dramatic value of this brief dialogue? Why did not the long chorus follow l. 996.

1010-1060. Compare Milton's attitude toward women, as here shown, with his four sonnets that celebrate women's virtues. What attitude toward women does *Comus* show?

1061-1267. Is there any reason why this incident should be shorter than the two preceding? Have the two speakers any real respect for each other? Are their contemptuous remarks based on facts? The Chorus and Manoa have been friendly to Samson, Dalila and Harapha hostile: could the order in which they appear have been altered to advantage?

1116. Does Samson wish to fight Harapha because of the latter's nationality, or is he aroused by Harapha's taunts?

1130-1138. Is there any truth in this charge? Harapha knew that the Philistines were unable to capture Samson until his hair was shorn; has Harapha forgotten this?

1156-1167. Does Harapha doubt the power of Dagon, or is he afraid of Samson?

1193. Is Samson's argument altogether sincere? How had he explained the Philistian marriage to his parents (*cf.* l. 222-5 and 421-3)?

1256. If Harapha were a brave man he would be unwilling to fight the blind Samson; if a coward, he would be afraid: fighting thus being out of the question, what proves him a coward?

1268-1307. What calls forth this chorus?

1308-1444. This incident involves an exit and second entrance of the Officer; and between these moments a brief dialogue of the Chorus and Samson: is this structural arrangement essentially the arrangement of the preceding incidents, or not? Has Harapha had any part in bringing about the mandate of the lords (*cf.* 1250-1252)? Why does Samson change his mind? Is the whole incident as dramatic as its predecessors?

1347. What does Samson threaten? How does the Officer take the threat? *Cf.* Harapha's attitude.

1381-1389. Is this sudden change consistent with the rest of Samson's actions?

1410-1412. Why does the Officer hold out to Samson a hope of freedom?

1413-1415. Is there a dramatic reason for this?

1427-1444. Is this a direct address to Samson, or a prayer spoken in his behalf after he has left the scene?

1445-1758. Does the varying length of these speeches seem to you to be significant?

1473-1475. Which was it?

1499. Do the several premonitions (here, l. 1381, and 1529) increase or diminish your interest?

1541-1570. Is the Messenger's way of imparting his news more or less dramatic than if he had come to the point at once?

1586-1589. Why should this be told briefly, since it is to be told again in detail?

1596-1659. What are some of the qualities of this piece of narration? Is it colored by the personality of the speaker?

1660-1707. What is the subject of this chorus? What is gained by dividing most of it into two semi-choruses?

1708-1744. Does Manoa show new characteristics?

1745-1758. What is the difference in tone between this and the preceding chorus? Which is more in accord with the general spirit of the play?

## APPENDIX.

### MILTON'S METRES.

To be of any real value, a study of Milton's versification should be exhaustive. The limits of this book permit only a reference to the several metres used, and to Milton's treatment of some of them.

Although a profound metrical artist, Milton is not prolific of metres. By far the greater part of his poetry is written in heroic blank verse,—the two epics, most of *Comus*, and most of *Samson Agonistes*. No other metre is used often enough to warrant our calling it a favorite one with Milton. Yet the poet was not incurious in the matter of verse forms, and wrote a number of translations of psalms (not printed in this edition), that can hardly be regarded otherwise than as metrical experiments. Within his chosen range Milton was absolute master: in his principal metre he not only used its previously known capabilities, but discovered in it new possibilities; and his other metres he used at least as effectively as did any of his predecessors. It is a matter of some interest, not to say regret, that although a student of Spenser, Milton did not use in any poem the Spenserian stanza.

The poems show the following metres: \*

**Heroic couplet** ( $5xa$ , rhyme formula  $aa$ ):—*Psalm cxiv.*, *Vac. Ex.*, *May Morn.* (l. 1-4, 9-10), *Shakespeare*, *Univ. Carrier* (both poems), *Arcades* (l. 26-83). Some of the lines in *Comus* (e. g., l. 495-512) are in this metre. Milton uses the metre in much the way his predecessors had done: that is, he did not discover in it the possibilities that Dryden and Pope made manifest. In all, about 260 lines.

**Octosyllabic couplet** ( $4xa$  or  $4ax$ ,  $aa$ ):—*Marchioness*, *May Morn.* (5-8), *L'All.* and *Il Pens.* (in these two poems from l. 11 to the end), *Arcades* (parts of the songs). Parts of *Comus* (e. g., 93-114, 976-1023) are also written in this metre, which was one of the favorite Elizabethan lyric measures. Milton fully caught its spirit. About 600 lines.

**Four-line stanzas**:—*Psalm cxxxvi.* purports to be in four-line stanzas, but in reality is composed in octosyllabic couplets ( $4xa$  and  $4ax$ ), each couplet followed by the refrain, which thus fills out the stanza. Other four-line stanzas are to be found among the metrical translations, which are separately discussed. It is rather remarkable that this

\* The foot made up of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented (iambus) is indicated by  $xa$ , the reverse order (trochee) by  $ax$ . A numeral preceding this symbol shows the number of feet in the line. The rhyme formula is indicated by  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$ , etc., lines that rhyme together being marked by the same letter. Thus,  $5xa$ , with rhyme formula  $aa$ , shows the metre of the first poem in this book, the paraphrase of *Psalm cxiv.*

most frequent of all stanza forms should not once have been used by Milton in an original poem. About 700 lines, few of them very good. This is the part of Milton's verse with which we can most readily dispense.

**Six-line stanzas** (*4xa* and *4ax*, *ababcc*):—The last two stanzas of the first song in *Arcades*. The first stanza is made up like a six-line stanza, but has an inserted line, which brings it into the next group. *Psalms* *iii.*, *iv.*, and *vii.* are in six-line stanzas.

**Seven-line stanzas** (six lines *5xa* and the seventh *6xa*, with rhyme formula *ababbcc*):—*Fair Infant*, *Nativity* (first four stanzas), *Passion*. This stanza, which has the rhyme formula of the 'rhyme royal,' but which ends with an Alexandrine instead of an ordinary pentameter, seems to have acquired its Alexandrine by imitation of the last line of the Spenserian stanza. 161 lines (not counting the first stanza of *Arcades*, which is in a different metre).

**Eight-line stanzas** (*3xa*, *3xa*, *5xa*, *3xa*, *3xa*, *5xa*, *4xa*, *6xa*, rhyming *aabccbdd*):—The Hymn in *Nativ.*, 27 stanzas, 216 lines. The *3xa* lines are sometimes replaced by *3ax* lines.

**Ten-line stanzas**:—The first ten lines of both *L'All.* and *Il Pens.* are written in alternate *3xa* and *5xa* lines, rhyming *abbacddecc*. A stanzaic effect is not intended. 20 lines.

**Sonnets**:—The eighteen regular sonnets, and the 'tailed sonnet' are spoken of elsewhere (p. 330).



272 lines. Milton also wrote five sonnets in Italian.

**Fourteen-line stanzas** (first seven lines *5xa*, eighth and ninth *3xa*, tenth and eleventh *5xa*, twelfth *3xa*, thirteenth *2xa*, fourteenth *3xa*; rhyme formula *abcbaccddceffe*):—*Circumcision*. This very complicated form Milton uses only in the two stanzas of this poem. It is not really a stanzaic form, but rather an irregular arrangement of rhymes and lines, of which the poet probably wrote the first fourteen easily and the last fourteen pretty laboriously. 28 lines.

**Irregular measures**:—*Time* and *Sol. Mus.*, 22 and 28 lines, respectively. The metre is mainly *5xa*, varied by *3xa*, *4xa*, and *4ax*, and ending with *6xa*. Most of the rhymes are in couplets. *Lycidas* is in irregularly rhymed *5xa* verse, varied by an occasional *3xa* line. Some lines do not rhyme, and some rhymes are several times repeated. The lyrics in *Comus* and *Arcades* are written freely, without repetition (except in the first song of *Arcades*) of stanzaic effect. The movement is chiefly iambic. The rhymes in the songs 'Sweet Echo' and 'Sabrina Fair' do not suggest any familiar formula. About 250 lines. Cf. last paragraph of this Appendix.

**Translations in various metres**:—The translation of the *Fifth Ode* of Horace (Book I.) is unrhymed; the lines are *5xa*, *5xa*, *3xa*, *3xa*,—this order four times repeated, making in reality four stanzas. In

ten or twelve places in his prose writings, Milton briefly quotes from the Latin, Greek, and Italian and translates the quotation into English. His medium is the regular heroic blank verse. *Psalms lxxx.-lxxxviii.* (April, 1648) are done in the familiar *4xa, 3xa, 4xa, 3xa* stanza, rhyming *abab*. *Psalms i.-viii.* (August, 1653) make up a series of metrical experiments. *Ps. i.* is in rhyming couplets, *5xa*, eight of the sixteen lines being marked by enjambement. *Ps. ii.* is in terza rima, *5xa*, rhyme formula *aba, bcb, cdc*, etc. *Ps. iii.* contains four stanzas rhyming *aabccb*; the movement of the lines is not regular, but the number of the accents in the six lines is 4, 2, 4, 2, 5, 4, respectively. *Ps. iv.* is in six-line stanzas, five *3xa* lines and one *5xa* line, rhyming *abbacc*. *Ps. v.* is in four-line stanzas, *4xa, 3xa, 4xa, 3xa*, rhyming *abab*. *Ps. vi.* is in four-line stanzas, *5xa, abba*. *Ps. vii.* is in six-line stanzas, four accents (*xa* or *ax*), *ababba*; the last stanza has but four lines, *aabb*. *Ps. viii.* is in four-line stanzas, *5xa, abab*.

**Blank verse** (*5xa*):—All the rest of the poetry, with the exception of the free rhythms of *Samson Agonistes* (less than four hundred lines). In all, the sum of Milton's pentameter blank verse is about 14,800 lines, and makes up about five-sixths of his English verse.

Milton's pre-eminence in epic blank verse cannot even be challenged: he stands at the head of English poets. In dramatic blank verse,—which is a

very different thing, although its scansion values are the same,—many of the Elizabethan playwrights surpass him, although, strictly speaking, he does not come into competition with them. It would be on the whole more accurate to say that his blank verse in epic poetry is unequaled, his blank verse in drama less fitted to its purpose. Neither *Comus* nor *Samson Agonistes* is in the same territory as that represented by the plays of Shakespeare. But Milton's dramatic blank verse is not that of the two epics. His epic blank verse is wonderfully flexible, chiefly by reason of the poet's freedom in managing the cadence within the line; his dramatic blank verse secures its freedom chiefly by reason of such external devices (if I may so call them) as an extra syllable at the end of a line,\* or an extra syllable preceding a cæsure. This greater elasticity well accords with the character of dialogue, which must be to some degree more colloquial and less formal than narrative. The departure from the strictures of prosody is much more marked in *Samson* than it is in *Comus*, and shows itself, in addition to the two ways that have been mentioned, in

\* In *Samson* the ratio of lines ending in an extra syllable is about one in seven; in *Comus* about one in ten. A hasty count of the endings in *P. L.* gives a ratio of about one in a hundred, with a range between one in twenty (Book I.), and one in two hundred (Book IV.) In *P. R.*, one in thirty, according to Masson. Particularly in the dialogue between Samson and Dalila, in *S. A.*, do we find these hypermeter lines.

the unusually large number of instances of extra syllables in the body of the line. Milton's advance toward license (or emancipation—whichever one may choose to regard it) resembles Shakespeare's: *Comus* and *Samson* are not farther apart, metrically, than are *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Winter's Tale*.

It only remains to add a word on those parts of *Samson* (mainly choral) in which no specific metrical system is followed. It is often difficult to see precisely how Milton intended some of these irregular lines to be scanned; but it is obvious, nevertheless, that the irregularity is intentional: Milton's ear was far too certain to allow an inharmonious line to mar the strength of his verse. And, indeed, if one divests himself of the notion of a rigid verse scheme, he will, in almost every instance, attain an effective reading of the verse by giving due stress to those words whose meaning logically requires emphasis. The lyrics of *Samson Agonistes* have little of the lilt of the songs of the two masks, but they have a deeper music, better fitting the solemnity of their theme.



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